Sept. 26, 1988

THE NEW YORKER

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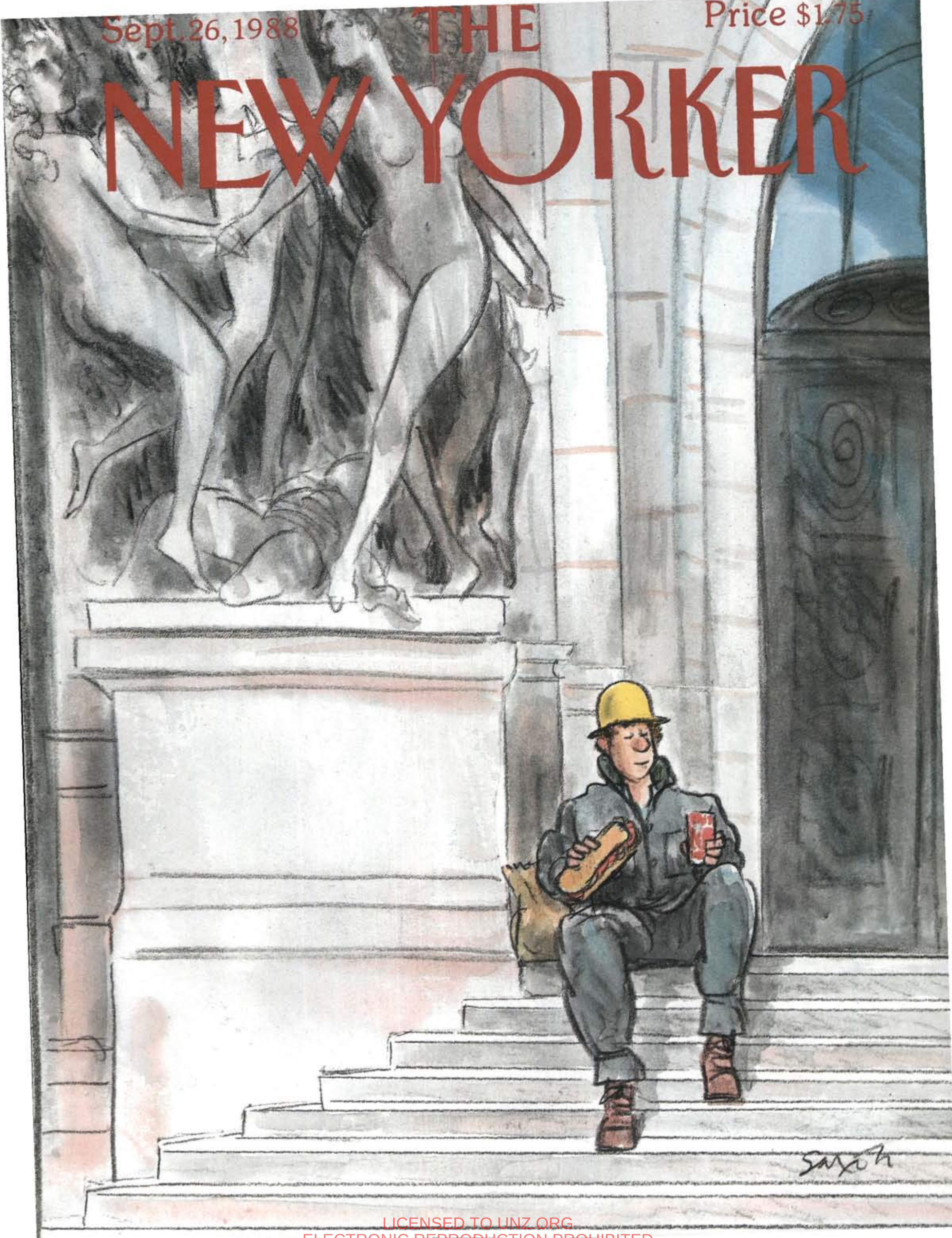

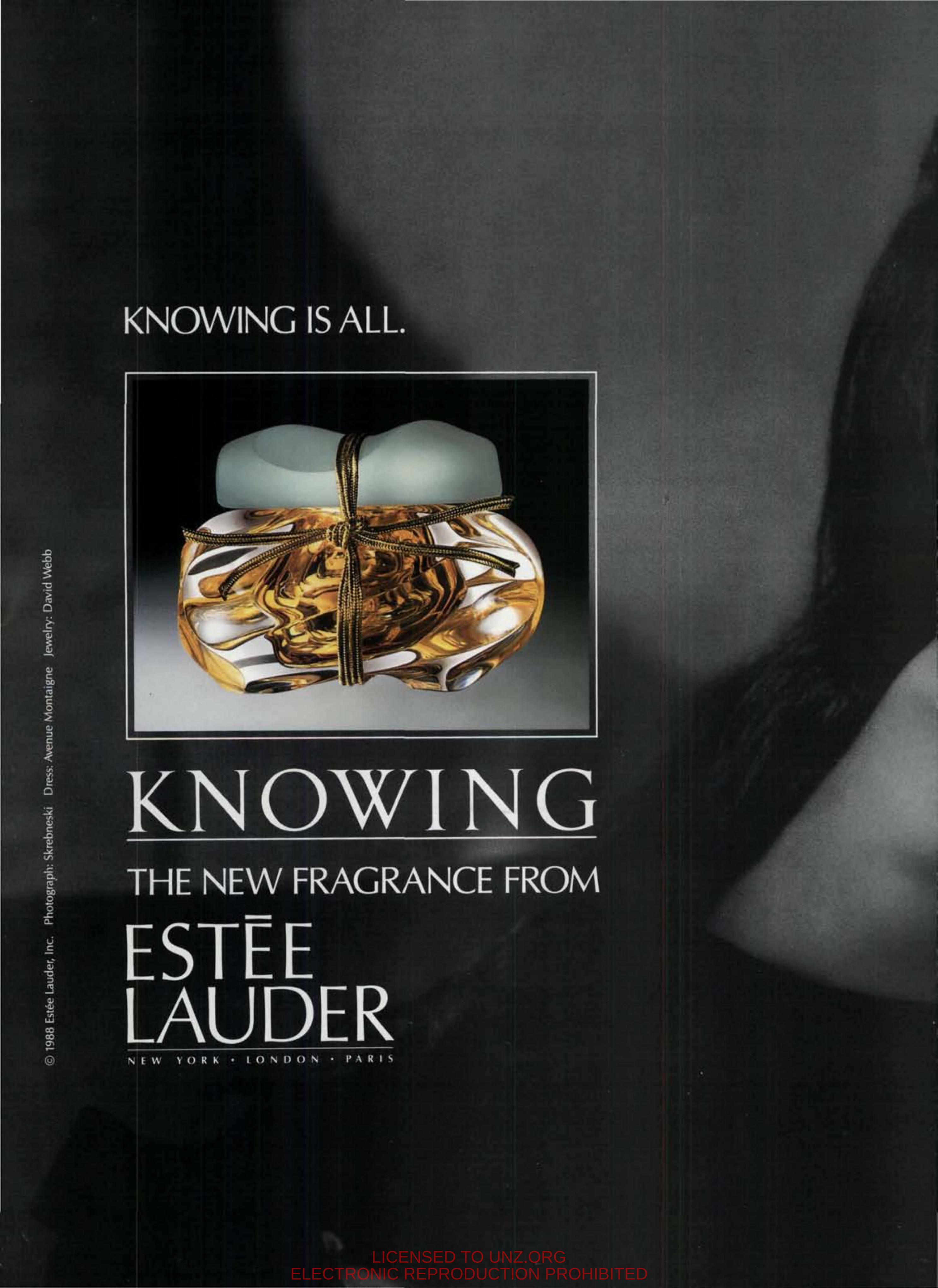

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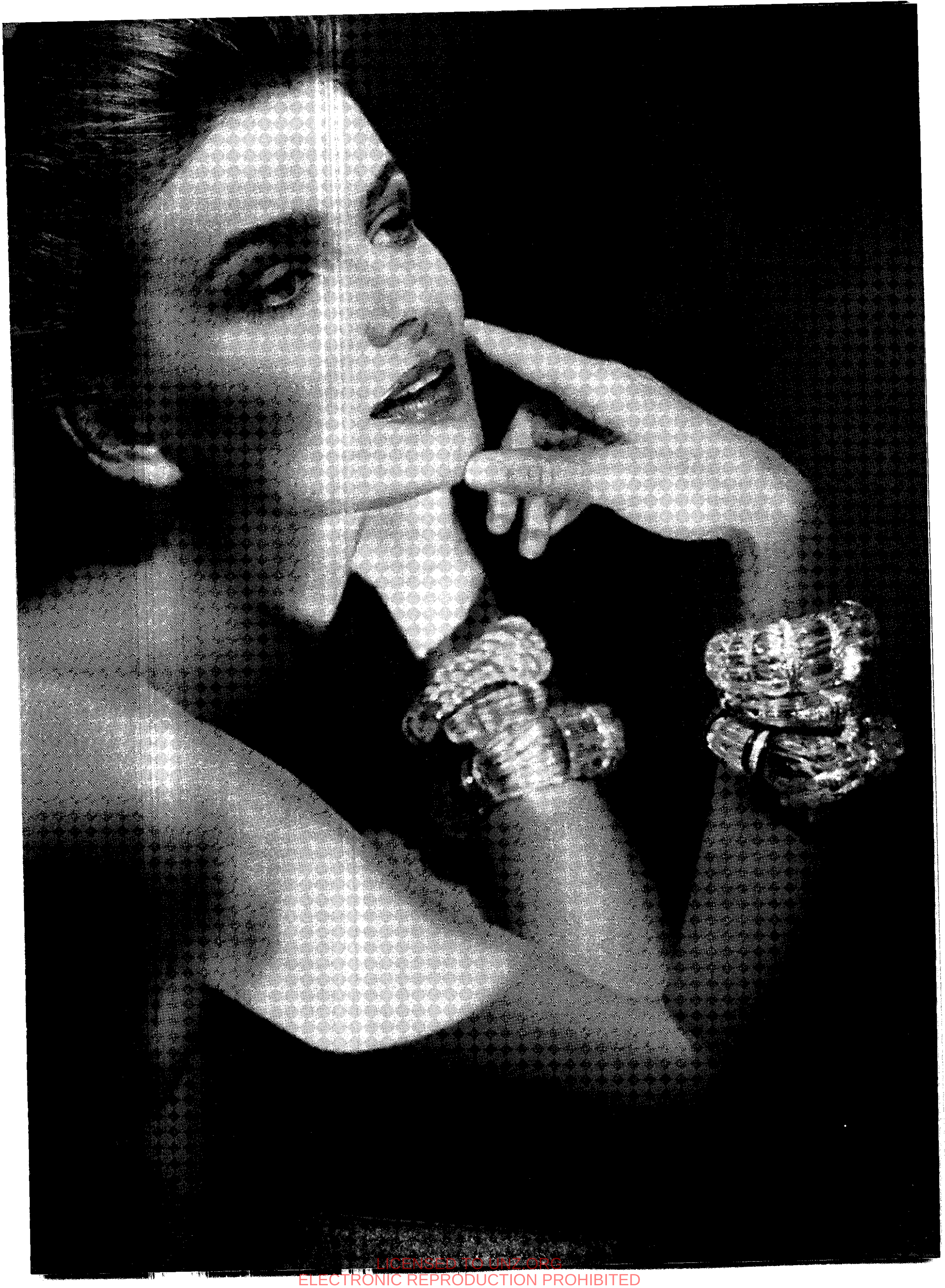

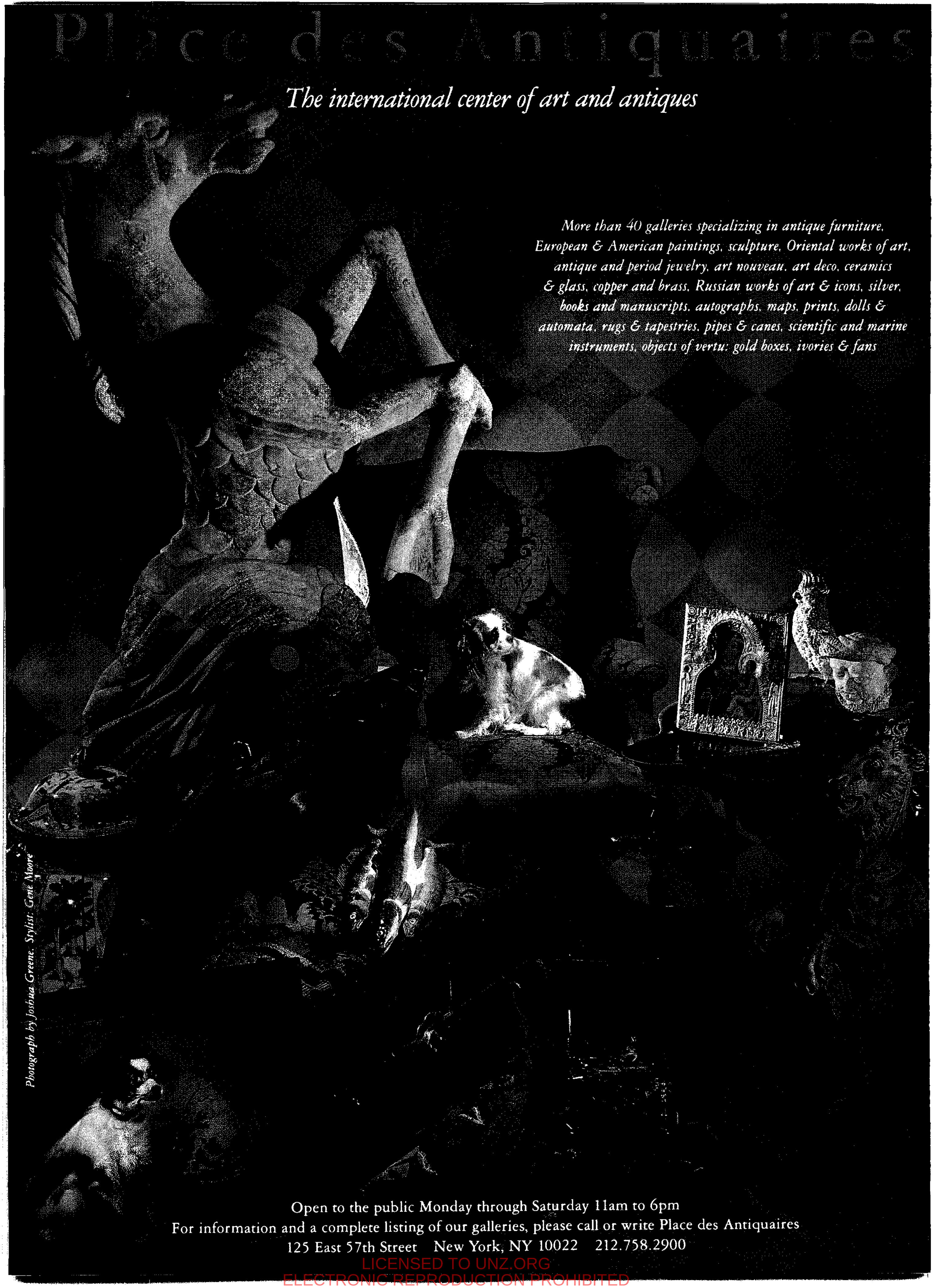

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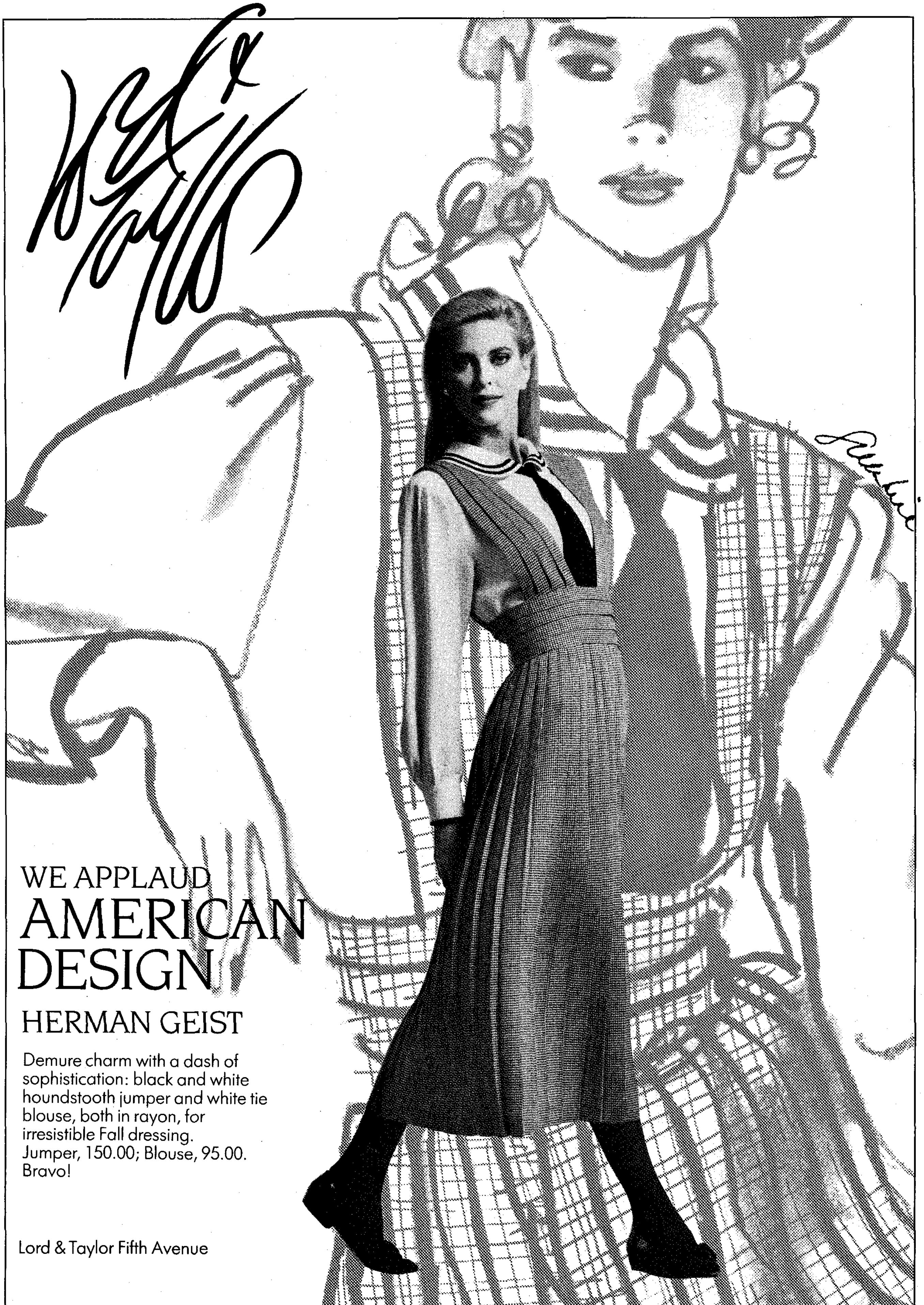

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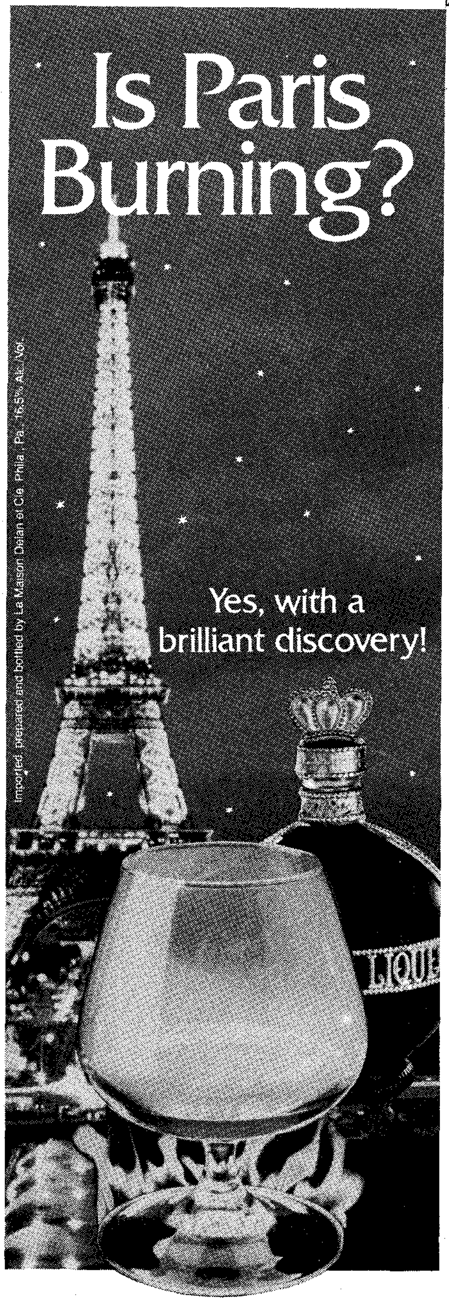
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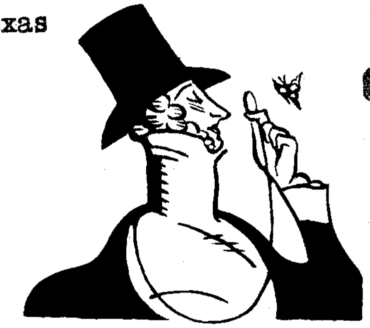

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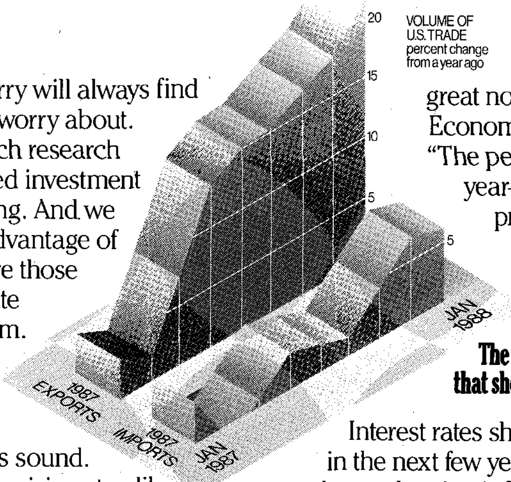
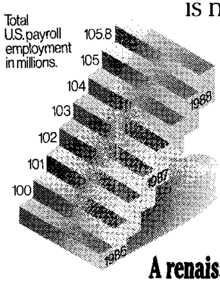
With so many things to worry about why are we so optimistic?

Those inclined to worry will always find things in the economy to worry about. But the fact is, Merrill Lynch research shows that many untapped investment opportunities are unfolding. And we believe the time to take advantage of them has arrived. Here are those trends. And what the astute investor can do about them.



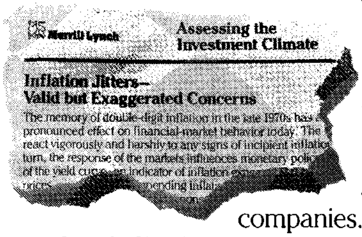
Economic forecast: Up, down, then up again.

The basic economy is sound. Personal income has been rising steadily for the last few years. The unemployment rate is near a 14-year low, and the gross national product is advancing at a healthy pace. While our research shows the possibility of a recession next year, it should be modest in length and degree. And economic growth should resume by the end of 1989.



A renaissance of optimism for U.S. capital spending.

The American economy is undergoing a major change: the Industrial Renaissance. Exports are growing strongly. That means a rise in orders for American capital goods and an excellent long-term opportunity to profit from the rebuilding of our industrial base.


Merrill Lynch
Assessing the Investment Climate

Inflation Jitters—Valid but Exaggerated Concerns

The memory of double-digit inflation in the late 1970s has a pronounced effect on financial-market behavior today. The react vigorously and harshly to any signs of incipient inflatio turn, the response of the markets influences monetary poli of the yield cu an indicator of inflation ex prices ending inflat

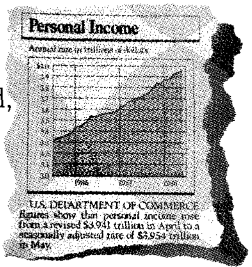
We also see emerging opportunities in selected high-yielding stocks such as those of utilities and insurance companies. And, as Merrill Lynch Chief Investment Strategist Charles I. Clough points out, "Foreign investment flows into dollar-denominated financial assets are likely to be increasingly supportive of the U.S. financial markets."

Inflation is up. But not severely.

While the drought in the Midwest is boosting food prices, the overall effect should be neither great nor long-lasting. As our Chief Economist Don Straszheim puts it, "The peak inflation rate, based on year-to-year changes in consumer prices, is likely to be about 5.5%, far below the 14.5% peak in the second quarter of 1980."

The interest rate outlook. Something that should make everyone feel optimistic.

Interest rates should decline substantially in the next few years. This would be spurred by moderating inflation, slower economic growth in 1989, and a rising surplus in the Social Security trust fund, which will make the government a bigger customer for its own debt, reducing the amount it must raise from the public.


Personal Income

Annual rate in trillions of dollars

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE figures show that personal income rose from a revised $3.941 trillion in April to a seasonally adjusted rate of $3.954 trillion in May.

This means that U.S. Treasury bonds and high-quality corporate and municipal bonds—which are now paying healthy interest rates—are also likely to increase considerably in value.

We believe the time to act is now.

For a fuller discussion of these opportunities, ask for our research report titled, "Unfolding Opportunities Amid Diminishing Expectations." Write Merrill Lynch Response Center, P.O. Box 30200, New Brunswick, N.J. 08989-0200 or call 1-800-637-7455, ext. 7066, or contact your Merrill Lynch Financial Consultant. We stand ready with specific recommendations.

Because once again we're saying, with some pride and no little pleasure, something you may have heard from us before:

Merrill Lynch is bullish on America.

Merrill Lynch

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

PLAYS AND MUSICALS

Ain't Misbehavin'—A revival, after ten years, of this celebration of the music and the comic spirit of Fats Waller, in all its beauty and variety, as conceived and directed by Richard Maltby, Jr. The members of the original company are present and just as dynamic as they were the first time around. They are Nell Carter, Andre De Shields, Armelia McQueen, Ken Page, and Charlaine Woodard. The invaluable (and protean) Luther Henderson, conductor and arranger, again presides at the piano. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/5/88.) (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 3.)

Blues in the Night—Carol Woods, Brenda Pressley, Leilani Jones, and Lawrence Hamilton appear as residents of a "cheap hotel," presumably in Chicago, in this recital of blues and popular songs, many of them from the thirties. All the singers are good, Miss Woods especially so, but the evening could be stronger than it is. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

Checkmates—Ron Milner's "domestic comedy," about an older couple who lease the apartment above them to a recently married young couple, should be more entertaining than it is. There are some funny moments, though, and the performances are distinguished. The actors are Ruby Dee and Paul Winfield (downstairs) and Denzel Washington and Marsha Jackson (upstairs). Woodie King, Jr., directed. (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

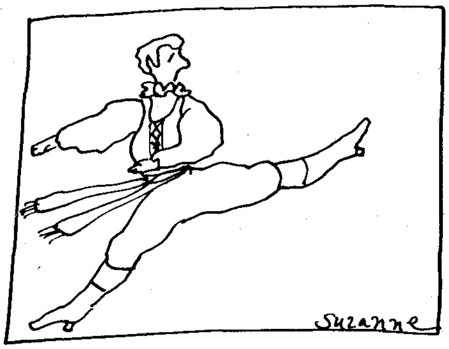
Forbidden Broadway 1988—The funniest show in town is a cluster of parodies of other shows along the Great White Way as conceived by Gerard Alessandrini, who directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. These are sung and acted by Tony DiBuono, Roxie Lucas, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath—inspired mimics all. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8:30; Saturdays at 7:30 and 10:30; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3:30.)

Godspell—A revival of the 1971 musical by Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak. (Lambs, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

M. Butterfly—David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play is based on an actual case. A French diplomat takes as his mistress a star of the Beijing Opera, and some twenty years later—when they are both charged with being spies—discovers that "she" is a he. David Dukes is the diplomat; B. D. Wong is exceptional as his lover. Lori Tan Chinn and George N. Martin give them sound support. (4/4/88) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2. Special performance for the Actors' Fund Sunday, Sept. 25, at 7:30.)

A Murder of Crows—Kim Hunter and Michael Higgins in a new play by Ed Graczyk. (South Street Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Wednesdays through Sundays at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 3.)

Negro Ensemble Company—Presenting **from the mississippi delta,** an ingenious play by Endesha Ida Mae Holland that, in a kind of dramatic collage, traces the life of a young woman from the fifties to the eighties. Brenda Denmark, LaTanya Richardson, and Gwen Roberts-Frost, three mettlesome actresses, portray her and an assortment of other characters, male and female. (9/5/88) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-8545. Wednesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 8:30; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays at 3 and Sundays at 2:30.)



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25	26	27	28			

Paul Robeson—This stirring production of Phillip Hayes Dean's biographical drama was seen in August at the South Street Theatre and has now moved to Broadway. Avery Brooks, the sole actor present, gives a performance that far transcends impersonation, and Ernie Scott is a strong presence at the piano. Previews through Tuesday, Sept. 27. Opens officially on Wednesday, Sept. 28. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8; opening-night curtain at 6:15. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

The Phantom of the Opera—The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible, including the overhyped performance of Michael Crawford in the title role. (2/8/88) (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.)

Romance / Romance—A pair of charming one-act musicals. Scott Bakula and Alison Fraser are as romantic as required in the leading roles. Barry Harman wrote the clever books and lyrics, and Keith Herrmann wrote the engaging scores. Mr. Harman directed. (5/16/88) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Speed-the-Plow—David Mamet's satire on Hollywood is just as scathing, just as acute as his "Glengarry Glen Ross," and even funnier, if that can be imagined. With David Rasche, Bob Balaban, and Felicity Huffman; directed by Gregory Mosher. (5/16/88) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6277. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.)

Tartuffe and **Romeo and Juliet**—Two works in repertory, presented by the RAPP Theatre Company. Molière's **tartuffe** plays Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. **romeo and juliet** plays Wednesday and Friday evenings, and Saturday matinées. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Evenings at 8. Matinées at 2. Closes Saturday, Oct. 1.)

Young Playwrights Festival—A program of three one-act plays: Robert Kerr's "And the Air Didn't Answer," Jonathan Marc Sherman's "Women and Wallace," and Eric Ziegenhagen's "Seniority." Previews Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 20-21. Opens officially on Thursday, Sept. 22. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Tuesdays, except Sept. 27, through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2. Closes Sat., Oct. 8. . . . ¶ On Saturday, Sept. 24, the evening performance will be followed by a staged reading of "The Boiler Room," by Kevin Corrigan.)

Long Runs—**anything goes:** This exuberant revival is primarily a tribute to Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Bill McCutcheon, Howard McGillin, Patti LuPone, and Kathleen Mahony-Bennett, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **broadway bound:** Neil Simon retains his accustomed skill at comedy but has wisely suppressed his weakness for surefire gags in a touching and unexpectedly serious study of a family—presumably the playwright's—as it begins to fall apart in Brooklyn in the nineteen-forties. Joan Rivers plays the mother; she will not perform on Wednesday, Sept. 21. Gene Saks directed. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Monday and Wednesday through Saturday at 8. Matinées Wednesday and Saturday at 2. Closes Sunday, Sept. 25.) . . . **burn this:** A play by Lanford Wilson, with Scott Glenn as a foulmouthed restaurant manager who woos and wins his dead brother's dancing partner. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **cats:** A musical version of T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." Score by Andrew Lloyd Webber, choreography by Gillian Lynne, and direction (and some lyrics) by Trevor Nunn. A superb spectacle, which may run for many more years and give cats the right to vote and hold office. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **a chorus line:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2.) . . . **driving miss daisy:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **the fantasticks:** This longest of long runs recently celebrated its twenty-eighth birthday. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **42nd street:** Pleasantly old-fashioned choreography by the late Gower Champion and a few classic songs enliven an otherwise inert pastiche of the Warner Brothers movie that made Ruby Keeler a star. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 398-0280. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:15. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2:15, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **frankie and johnny in the clair de lune:** Bonnie Franklin and Tony Musante in Terrence McNally's enchanting comedy about sex and the sudden onset of love in an apartment on Tenth Avenue. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 10. Matinées Wednesdays at 2:30 and Sundays at 3.) . . . **into the woods:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **me and my girl:** A silly chestnut of a British musical, dating back to the thirties. With Jim Dale. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **les misérables:** Tim Shew and Norman Large star in the musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel, but the real standouts of the production are the settings, by John Napier, and the lighting, by David Hersey. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. Nightly, except Sundays, at 8. Matinées Saturdays at 2.) . . . **nunsense:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **oil city symphony:** Mike Craver, Mark Hardwick, Michelle Horman, and Mary Murfitt, gifted and sophisticated singers and instrumentalists, appear as a quartet of dedicated hicks reuniting at their small-town high school in this very funny musical. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 7 and 10; and Sundays at 7. Matinées Sundays at 3.) . . . **SARAFINA!:** This South African musical, an explosion of talent, was conceived, written, and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also, with Hugh Masekela, composed and arranged the score. The acting, dancing, and singing, to a local form of popular music called Mbaqanga, are a wonder. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **A SHAYNA MAIDEL:** A well-wrought and deeply moving play by Barbara Lebow about a Polish-Jewish family torn apart by the events of the Hitler era. The production is beautifully directed by Mary B. Robinson. Bring lots of Kleenex to this one, but expect to leave uplifted. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394. Tuesdays, except Sept. 20, through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays, except Sept. 21, and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3. Special performances Monday, Sept. 19, at 8, and Sunday, Sept. 25, at 7.) . . . **STARLIGHT EXPRESS:** A bore on roller skates. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8. Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays at 2, and Sundays at 3.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana, and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 6 and 10; and Sundays at 7:30. Matinées Sundays at 3.)

MISCELLANY

MOSCOW CIRCUS—Acrobats, clowns, trapeze artists, and skateboarding bears. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 8; Wednesdays at 2:30 and 8; and Saturdays and Sundays at 11, 2:30, and 7:30. Closes Sunday, Oct. 9.)

CALVIN TRILLIN'S UNCLE SAM—The writer and humorist offering some commentary on the preëlection state of the union. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Saturday, Sept. 24; Monday, Sept. 26; and Wednesday, Sept. 28, all at 8. Matinée Sunday, Sept. 25, at 3. Closes Sunday, Oct. 9.)

WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING—Sandra Bernhard in a one-woman show. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8; Fridays and Saturdays at 8 and 10:30; and Sundays at 5:30 and 9. Closes Sunday, Oct. 2.)

JACKIE MASON'S "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ME!"—The comedian's one-man show. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099. Wednesdays through Saturdays and Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8. Matinées Sundays at 3; special matinée Saturday, Sept. 24, at 2.)

"THE BROADWAY BENEFIT AT BAM"—A fund-raiser for the Gay Men's Health Crisis, with Betty Buckley, Harvey Fierstein, Penn and Teller, Jule Styne, and others. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Monday, Sept. 26, at 8.)

DANCE

JOSÉ GRECO—With his company of fifteen Spanish dancers, singers, and musicians. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Tuesdays, except Sept. 20, through Saturdays at 8; Sundays and Tuesday, Sept. 20, at 7:30. Matinées Saturdays and Sundays at 2. Through Sunday, Oct. 2.)

CYNTHIA GREGORY AND FERNANDO BUJONES—With an eleven-member company, in the opening performances of a one-week engagement that will run through Sunday, Oct. 2. The program consists of two new ballets, a selection of pas de deux, and Act III of "Coppélia." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 246-8989. Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7:30, and Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A big, soigné cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, in the heart of the fur and fashion-student districts. **BLOSSOM DEARIE,** whose voice is no bigger than a dainty child's and is just the right instrument for singing "Peel Me a Grape" or "Moonlight Saving Time," gives an early-bird show Wednesdays through Saturdays at six-thirty.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The long-gone midtown pleasure dome (1949-65) after which this airy two-tiered operation is named had a midget m.c. named Pee Wee Marquette, caged finches, and Bird himself; the new room has waiters and waitresses in bowling shirts, an avian logo, and jazz people of various modern schools. The schedule, in part: Wednesday, Sept. 21, the **RODNEY JONES** trio; Thursday, Sept. 22, the **JIMMY MADISON** quartet; Friday and Saturday, Sept. 23-24, the **BARRY HARRIS** trio and others; and Monday, Sept. 26, in a benefit performance, **HUGH MASEKELA, MIRIAM MAKEBA,** and members of the cast of "Sarafina!" Music from nine Sundays through Thursdays and from nine-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—On the back wall of this jazz club, there's a neon version of the Manhattan skyline, with a crescent moon and two stars attendant upon it—one of the best examples of inert-gas folk art we know of. Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 20-25, the vocal-and-percussion team of **FLORA PURIM** and **AIRTO** trades sets with the **MICHEL CAMILO** trio; starting Tuesday, Sept. 27, **PHYLLIS HYMAN** sings. Music from nine. Dining.

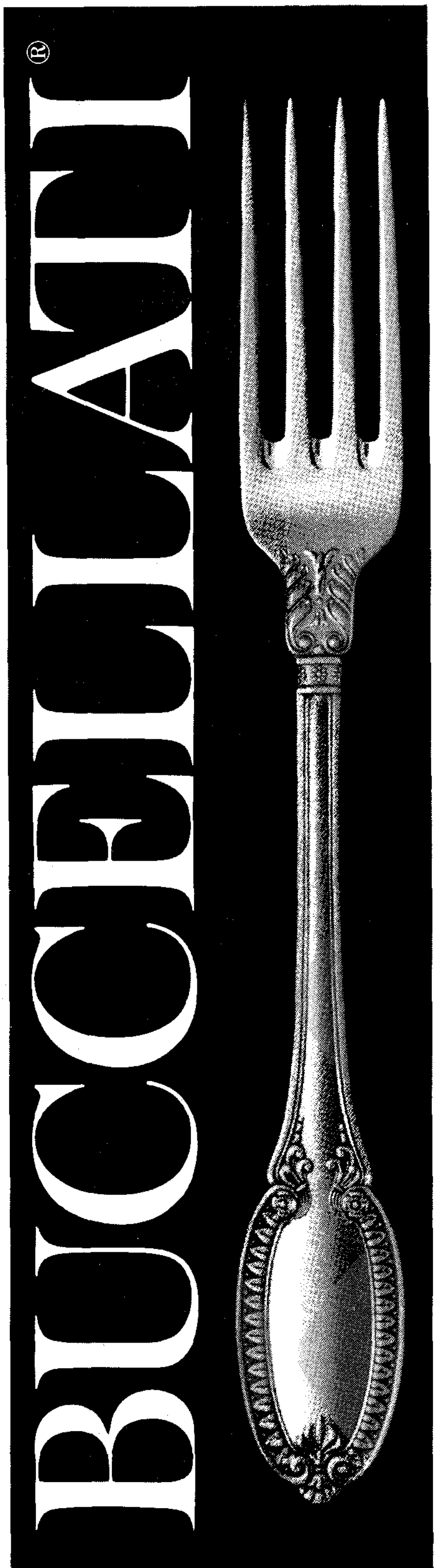
BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Music for many kinds of people, including unreconstructed folkies, rock-and-roll fundamentalists, Village bopcats, and followers of **BRANFORD MARSALIS.** Mr. Marsalis, who was one of "Da Fellas" in Spike Lee's 1987 movie "School Daze," displays his saxophone talent here, accompanied by **HARRY CONNICK, JR.,** at the piano, on Saturday, Sept. 24. A quintet run by trumpeter **TERENCE BLANCHARD** and alto saxophonist **DONALD HARRISON**—two young musicians of a conservative stripe, who followed the Marsalis brothers into Art Blakey's band—performs Tuesday, Sept. 20. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A crowded, duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and (a new wrinkle) drummers compete for your ear with professional conversationalists. Truth and beauty usually prevail. **FREDDY COLE,** a pianist and singer who has some of his older brother Nat's easy, drifting way with a ballad, is here with a trio through Saturday, Sept. 24. Sunday, Sept. 25, pianist **KENNY BARRON** works with bassist **RAY DRUMMOND; JIM MC NEELY** plays piano to Mr. Drummond's bass starting Monday, Sept. 26. First set at nine-forty-five. Dining.

CARLOS I, 432 Sixth Ave., at 10th St. (982-3260)—Everything about this club is nice: the long rows of tables covered with pink linen, the bijou bandstand, the view from the bar of the bandstand, and the view out the window of Vaux and Withers' gabled Victorian courthouse. **AL GREY,** the former Basie-ite who gets laughing sounds and big wa-was and complete sentences out of his old talking trombone, leads a quintet Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 20-25. **BENNY CARTER** brings in a quartet starting Tuesday, Sept. 27. Saxophonist **HAMIET BLUIETT** directs his big band on Mondays. Music from nine-thirty.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**RONNY WHYTE** plays piano and sings in the Bemelmans Bar from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through a heavy-duty steel door, through a green Plexiglas door, down a long, narrow, fun-house passageway (mirrors in which you can watch yourself multiply; corrugated-metal siding you can riffle), and down a flight of stairs, you'll find this velvet-and-mirror-walled *boîte.* Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 20-25, Danish bassist **NIELS-HENNING ØRSTED PEDERSEN** leads a group featuring **NIELS LAN DOKY** and **BILLY HART;** starting Tuesday, Sept. 27, **RICHIE COLE** plays lightning saxophone, accompanied by **VIC JURIS** on guitar. Mon-



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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

days are in the hands of guitarist **LES PAUL.** Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—Two things not known to be available in the next world—Chinese food and American jazz—can be found here, under a greenhouse roof giving onto a patch of midtown sky. **ROGER KELLAWAY,** a pianist for whom two hands are not always enough (he sometimes uses an elbow to splatter the keyboard or to punctuate one of his flying tours around it), is here Thursday through Saturday, Sept. 22-24, with bassist **MICHAEL MOORE;** from Tuesday, Sept. 27, Mr. Kellaway works with **MILT HINTON.** Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

J's, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—A room where the tenth letter of the alphabet (uncapped and disguised as a quarter note) turns up often: on doors, window shades, matchbooks. It's also a room with a view (of Broadway) and with jazz (mostly of the mainstream type). **JOHN PIZZARELLI,** a guitarist whose models include his easygoing dad, Bucky, and a singer whose inspirations include Nat Cole ("Hit That Jive, Jack" and "Straighten Up and Fly Right" are in his repertoire), is here on Thursdays with his trio. The rest of the schedule: Mondays, Sept. 19 and 26, **DICK HYMAN;** Tuesdays, Sept. 20 and 27, **RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT;** and Saturday, Sept. 24, the **ROY MERIWETHER** trio. Music from eight Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Turn-of-the-century New York Sunday *Herald* posters and Hirschfeld caricatures on the walls, and, next to the brass-railed partition between the bar and the dining room, a modern Steinway. Tuesday through Saturday, Sept. 20-24, **STEVE KUHN** is at the piano, accompanied by **RON CARTER** on bass; starting Tuesday, Sept. 27, the piano-bass team of **BILL MAYS** and **JOHN GOLDSBY** goes to work. **HARRY CONNICK, JR.,** a young New Orleans-born pianist (he studied with the father of all the Marsalises) and fashion plate (in the smart tickler tradition), flies all by himself on Sundays and Mondays. Music from about nine-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor retreat (attained by passing through a recently annexed downstairs restaurant) that features avant-garde jazz, advanced and unadvanced rock, and miscellaneous weird sounds. It has a slapped-together, homemade look, and judging by the S.R.O. crowds, it is a flourishing enterprise. Guitarist Marty Willson-Piper, of the Australian rock band the Church, plays two sets on Tuesday, Sept. 20, and **ANDREW CYRILLE,** a drummer who has worked with Cecil Taylor, plays one on Thursday, Sept. 22. Mondays belong to **JEMEEL MOONDOC'S** Jus Grew Orchestra, and Wednesdays to **THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS.** Music after nine.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—Unicorns and lions on the walls, well-heeled cats on the banquettes, and **MEL TORMÉ** on the bandstand. Mr. Tormé, whose autobiography, "It Wasn't *All* Velvet," is due out in October, sings here Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine and eleven. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Ritz, 119 E. 11th St. (254-2800)—Up-to-the-minute rock in a half-century-old ballroom. It's a place for people who don't mind taking their rock standing up; the few seats that exist—in the balcony—are reserved for the usual suspects. Tuesday, Sept. 20, Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians; Thursday, Sept. 22, **DJAVAN;** Friday, Sept. 23, Meatloaf; and Saturday, Sept. 24, **LEON RUSSELL** and **EDGAR WINTER.** Shows Sundays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A musical melting pot: samba bands, African pop bands, reggae people, zydeco outfits, and salsa ensembles all pass through this former luncheonette. Friday, Sept. 23, **TABOU COMBO,** and Saturday, Sept. 24, **LOREMIL MACHADO & SARAVA.** Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club—but not so crowded, as Yogi Berra said of another night spot, that nobody comes here anymore. **JAMES MOODY,** a saxophonist, flutist, and humorist who spent many years on the road with bebop's leading cutup, Dizzy Gillespie, is here Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 20-25; **ART BLAKEY & THE JAZZ MESSENGERS** play Mondays and for the week starting Tuesday, Sept. 27. Shows from ten. Dining.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Downstairs, in the gym-size room where hep-cat d.j. Symphony Sid used to spend his Monday evenings hosting Latin-jazz shows, Latin music is still the rule on Mondays. On Sept. 19, **JON FADDIS** plays his trumpet with bands led by **MONGO SANTAMARIA** and **JERRY GONZALEZ.** On Sept. 26, **MICHEL CAMILO** finesses the piano with **EDDIE PALMIERI** and **PAPO LUCCA** and their bands. Music from nine. Friday and Saturday, Sept. 23-24, at eight, flamenco guitarist Carlos Montoya has the floor. . . . ¶ One flight up, in the Terrace Bar, where business and conversation are often at boom level, **JUNIOR MANCE** and **MARTY RIVERA** engage in piano-bass duets nightly except Mondays. On Tuesdays they trade sets with **HELLMAN'S ANGELS,** a string trio whose head angel, **DAPHNE HELLMAN,** plays the harp. Music from ten.

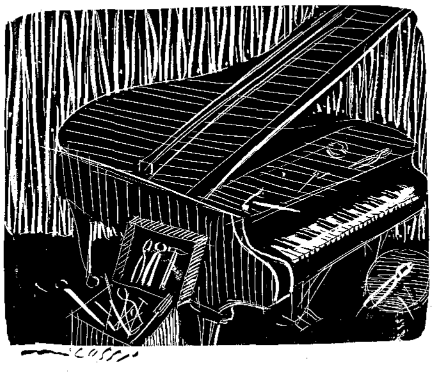
Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—One of the few places below the surface of New York that deserve landmark status. It's also one of the few places anywhere that have a notable (if that's the right word) light fixture—one that Charles Mingus K.O.'d while trying to reason with the proprietor, and that the proprietor, a preservationist as well as a businessman, decided to leave in Mingus-ized condition. Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 20-25, alto saxophonist **BOBBY WATSON** leads a quintet; Tuesday, Sept. 27, **WYNTON MARSALIS** brings in a quintet for a six-night run. Mondays are in the hands of the **MEL LEWIS** big band. Music after ten.

West End, 2911 Broadway, at 113th St. (666-8750)—Those who can resist the temptations of the large barroom here—pinball, video games, a dialogue with a budding logical positivist from Columbia U.—will find another, smaller room, where jazz musicians hold sway. Wednesday through Sunday, Sept. 21-25, trumpeter **JORDAN SANDKE'S** quintet, featuring singer Judy Niemack. Music from about nine. Dining.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Pasta and jazz. The latter emanates from a passageway between a front-room bar and a back room reserved for trenchermen. Through Saturday, Sept. 24, **JOE BECK** on guitar and **SANTI DEBRIANO** on piano, and starting Monday, Sept. 26, **KENNY BARRON** at the piano and **STAFFORD JAMES** on bass. Sundays belong to the long-running duo of **GENE BERTONCINI** and **MICHAEL MOORE.** Music weeknights from eight and Sundays from seven.

JAZZ / ROCK / PERSONAL APPEARANCES / PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Grateful Dead—Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 19-20, and Thursday and Friday, Sept. 22-23, at 7:30, and Saturday, Sept. 24, at 7 (a benefit concert, with Bruce Hornsby & the Range and Suzanne Vega).



Paul Zaloom—Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Wednesday through Saturday, Sept. 21-24, at 8, and Sunday, Sept. 25, at 3.

Urban Bush Women—With Craig Harris and the Dirty Tones Band, Laurie Carlos, Jessica Hagedorn, and Robbie McCauley. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Thursday through Sunday, Sept. 22-25, and Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 8:30. Through Sunday, Oct. 2.)

American Jazz Orchestra—With Tony Bennett in a concert of swing-era band music. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Monday, Sept. 26, at 8. For information about tickets, call 353-4195.)

Rod Stewart—Madison Square Garden. Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 26-27, at 8.

ART

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Alexander Calder (1898-1976)—Drawings, stabiles, and mobiles. Through Oct. 22. (Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.) . . . ¶ Gouaches. Through Oct. 15. (Haime, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Joel Fisher / Marianne Eigenheer—Sculptures. / Drawings. Through Oct. 30. (Swiss Institute, 35 W. 67th St. Mondays through Fridays, 2 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 2 to 6.)

Stuart Frost—Pen-and-ink drawings of fantasy architecture, heavily embroidered with, say, figures or plants. Through Oct. 12. (Babcock, 20 E. 67th St. Closes at 4 on Saturdays.)

Anna and Wolfgang Kubach-Wilmsen—Stone sculptures representing books, letters, and newspapers. Through Oct. 22. (Staempfli, 47 E. 77th St.)

Rona Pondick—An installation of beds constructed with satin, wood, lead, and bronze. Through Oct. 1. (Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St.)

Group Shows—At the **GRAHAM,** 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St.: Paintings from the thirties and forties by Eleanor de Laittre, Alice Trumbull Mason, and Agnes Weinrich, among others. Through Oct. 1. . . . **HIRSCHL & ADLER MODERN,** 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.: Photographs by Sigmar Polke, and prints by Joseph Beuys and Cy Twombly. Through Oct. 1. (Open Mondays.) . . . **KNOEDLER,** 19 E. 70th St.: Drawings by four sculptors: Nancy Graves, Herbert Ferber, Michael Heizer, and David Smith. Through Oct. 6.

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Rudolf Bauer (1889-1953)—Geometric paintings and works on paper from the twenties and thirties. Through Oct. 7. (Kerr, 37 W. 57th St.)

William Beckman—Two double portraits of the artist and his wife, and the studies for them. Through Oct. 19. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

Steven Campbell—Recent paintings. Through Oct. 1. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Antonio Frasconi—A new series of works inspired by the *desaparecidos* of Uruguay. Through Oct. 4. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Robert Goodnough and David Hare—Abstract paintings and sculptures by each artist. Through Oct. 8. (Shippee, 41 E. 57th St.)

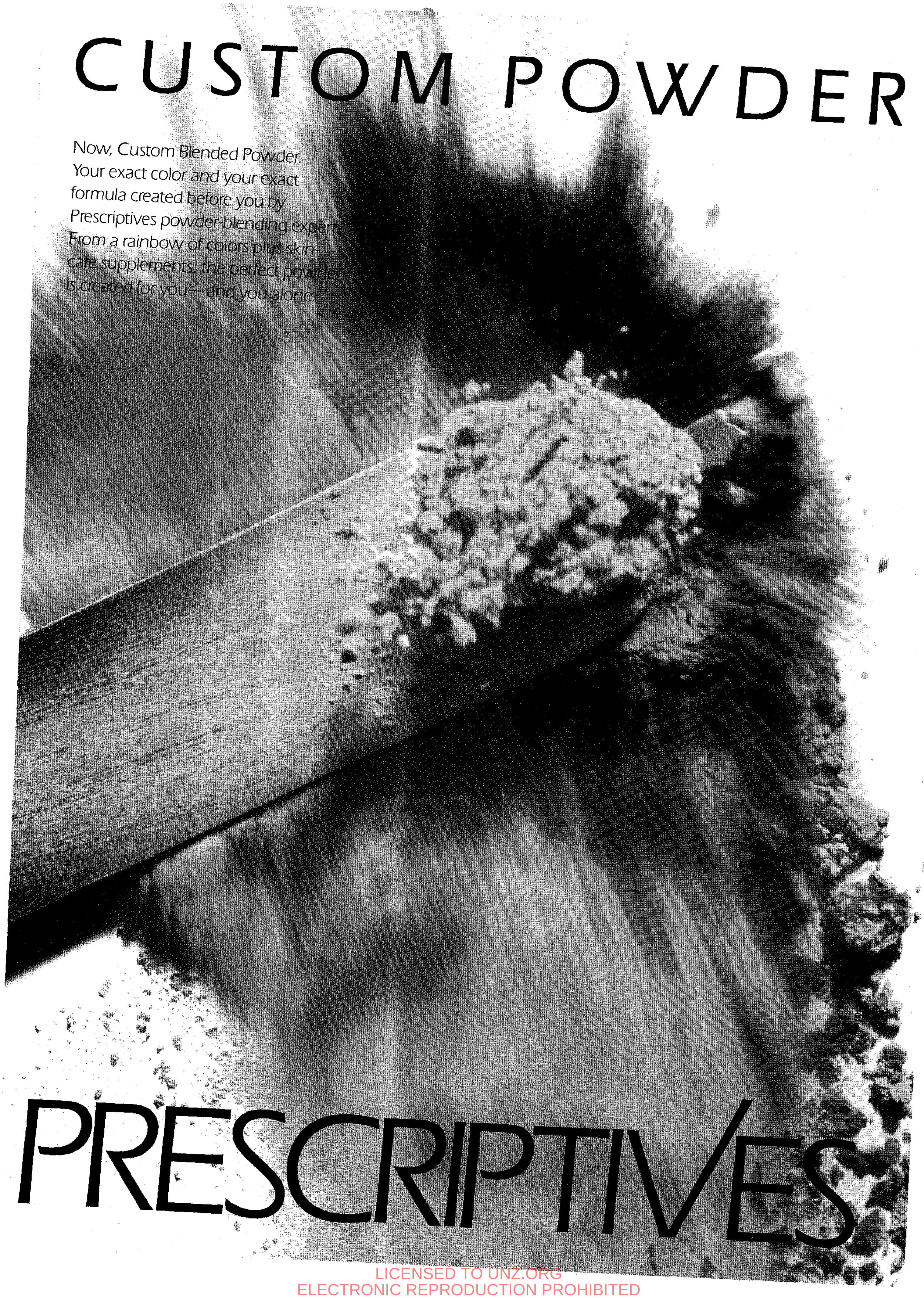
Jan Groover / Lee Krasner (1908-84)—Photographs. / Abstract impastoed paintings from the late thirties and early forties. Through Oct. 1. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

John Stuart Ingle—Realist still-lifes. Through Sept. 30. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Alan Johnston—Stylized gesso-and-charcoal paintings and bronze sculptures. Through Oct. 1. (Tilton, 24 W. 57th St.)

Benjamin Lira—Emblematic figures recur in these recent paintings, some of which have sand or marble dust mixed in the medium. Through Oct. 5. (Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St.)

George Nick—Plein-air paintings of Boston and



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PRESCRIPTIVES

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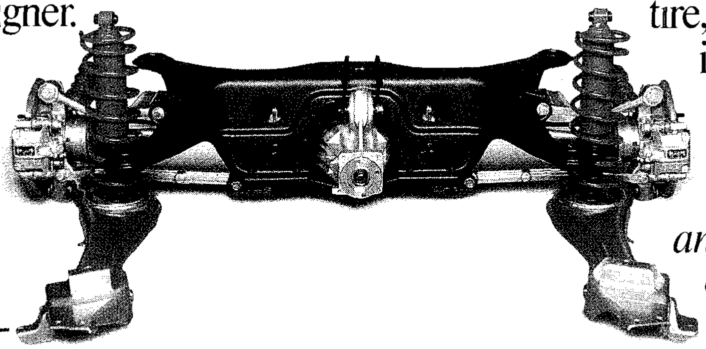

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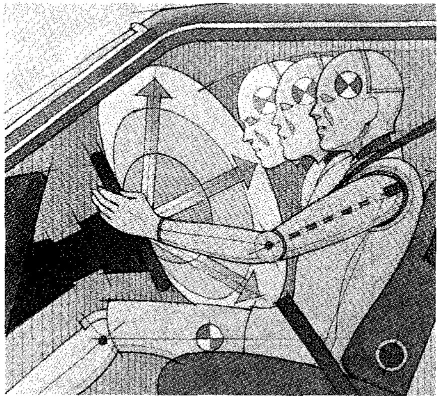

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	19	20	21	22	23	24
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ART—Cont'd

its environs. Through Oct. 5. (Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St.)

Leigh Palmer and Jeanne Revegno—Still-lifes and interiors by each painter. Through Oct. 1. (French, 41 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Rodney Ripps—Stripe paintings with three-dimensional wood protrusions. Through Oct. 8. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.)

Thomas Lanigan Schmidt—Adolescent rites of passage are the themes of new three-dimensional works by an artist who continues to mine the fields of tinfoil. Through Oct. 8. (Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Burt Silverman—Portrait drawings that have appeared in these pages accompanying Profiles. Through Oct. 1. (Grand Central Art Galleries, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

James Wolfe / Lawrence Poons—New abstract sculptures constructed with ribbons of twisted steel. Through Oct. 8. / New paintings. Through Oct. 1. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

GALLERIES—SoHo

Doug Anderson—Paintings done on what the gallery calls "groovy sixties polka-dot fabric." Through Oct. 1. (Stux, 155 Spring St.)

Dotty Attie—A draftsman noted for her illustrated stories is showing a group of paintings based on details from works by Caravaggio, Ingres, Eakins, and others. Through Oct. 15. (P.P.O.W, now located at 532 Broadway.)

Joseph Beuys (1921-86)—An installation entitled "Half Time," documenting the artist's 1982 planting of seven thousand oak trees in West Germany. Through Oct. 15. (Gallery Moos, 133 Greene St.)

Frederick Childs—Paintings. Through Oct. 8. (Brown, 560 Broadway.)

Y. J. Cho—Photo-Realist paintings of city corners and alleyways. Through Oct. 8. (O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway.)

Garth Evans—Recent abstract sculptures. Through Oct. 1. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Douglas Florian—Large-scale paintings. Through Oct. 8. (Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St.)

Edgar Franceschi—Paintings. Through Oct. 1. (Allen, 560 Broadway.)

Suzan Frecon—Paintings and works on paper. Through Saturday, Sept. 24. (Pretto, 103 Sullivan St. Opens at 1.)

Vincent Gallo—Drawings. Through Oct. 1. (Nosei, 100 Prince St.)

Sidney Geist / Elliott Barowitz—Sculptures. / Paintings of airplanes and war machines. Through Oct. 8. (Ingber, 415 West Broadway.)

Jack Goldstein / Susan Leopold—Paintings done with phosphorescent paint. / Miniature cityscapes, street corners, and interiors set in boxes, each of which is viewed through a wide-angle lens. Through Oct. 1. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

David Hacker—New sculptures and drawings. Through Oct. 8. (Plumb, 81 Greene St.)

Jan Häfström—Constructions incorporating wood, found objects, fabric, and paint. Through Oct. 5. (Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway.)

Margo Herr—Paintings inspired by ancient stone monuments in the British Isles. Through Saturday, Sept. 24. (55 Mercer Street Gallery.)

Budd Hopkins / Ellen Weiner—Paintings and large-scale wood sculptures. / Abstract works on paper. Through Oct. 13. (Pearl, 420 West Broadway.)

Mike Kelley—Drawings, banners, and objects, many of which display a scatological sense of humor. Through Oct. 1. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Joseph Kosuth—Freud writ large again. Through Oct. 15. (Castelli, 578 Broadway, a new venue for the peripatetic dealer.)

Jannis Kounellis—An installation incorporating soil, rocks, burlap, and steel. Through Oct. 15. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Allan McCollum—The Alexander Gallery has been commandeered by a population of six-and-a-half-foot salt-shaker-like concrete sculptures, identical except for their coats of paint. Perhaps because they combine the characteristics of mass production and one-of-a-kind art, the artist calls them his "perfect vehicles." Through Oct. 4. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.)

Bruce Nauman—Two conceptual works (from 1970) that combine steel, a video, and polyurethane foam. Through Oct. 15. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Jim Nutt—Portraits of imaginary subjects with cockeyed features. Through Oct. 18. (Kind, 136 Greene St.)

Ludwig Sander (1906-75)—A retrospective of geometric color-field paintings. Through Oct. 15. (Esman, 70 Greene St.)

Kenny Scharf—New paintings with titles like "Obglob" and "Ing," many of which seem to pulsate with forms resembling amoebas or arteries. Through Oct. 22. (Shafrazi, 163 Mercer St.)

Sandy Skoglund—Two installations at 568 Broadway: Brandt (through Oct. 1) and Lorence-Monk (through Oct. 15).

Arlene Slavin—Three-dimensional landscapes constructed in the fashion of traditional and not so traditional screens. Through Oct. 8. (Perlow, 560 Broadway.)

Alan Turner—Paintings. Through Oct. 1. (*Koury Wingate, 578 Broadway.*)

Anton van Dalen—A retrospective of paintings, sculptures, drawings, and objects such as wooden toys and dioramas. Through Oct. 29. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway.)

Clemens Weiss—An installation of transparent boxes that hold drawings, paintings, writings, and objects. Through Oct. 8. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Group Material—This collaborative has mounted the first in a series of four installations exploring various workings of democracy. Through Oct. 8. (Dia Art Foundation, 77 Wooster St. Opens at noon.)

Group Shows—At the **AUDIELLO**, 142 Greene St.: Sculptures by Saint Clair Cemin, Joel Fisher, Jon Kessler, and Joel Otterson. Through Oct. 8. . . . **BEITZEL**, 113 Greene St.: Paintings by Aaron Fink, Lois Lane, and others. Through Oct. 1. . . . **BERNARDUCCI**, 560 Broadway: New York City as seen in the paintings, photographs, and works on paper of Matthew Radford, Charles Saxon, Phyllis Rosenblatt, and others. Through Oct. 1. . . . **COOPER**, 155 Wooster St.: A twentieth-anniversary show. Through Wednesday, Sept. 28. . . . **DAVIS**, 568 Broadway: Unpainted metal wall sculptures by Lisa Hoke, Jannis Kounellis, Donald Judd, and others. Through Oct. 1. . . . **THE DRAWING CENTER**, 35 Wooster St.: Drawings by sixteen artists. Through Oct. 1. (Open Wednesday evenings until 8.) . . . **GLADSTONE**, 99 Greene St.: Sculptures by Carl Andre, Jannis Kounellis, and Bruce Nauman. Through Oct. 8. . . . **HOFFMAN**, 429 West Broadway: Geometric works in various mediums by Howard Buchwald, Rupert Deese, Christopher Lane, and John Okulick. Through Oct. 12. . . . **MARCUS**, 578 Broadway: Sculptures and photographs by Ian Hamilton Finlay, Ian Wallace, Sam Samore, and Paul Graham. Through Oct. 1. . . . **M-13**, 72 Greene St.: Paintings by four Expressionists: Robert Beauchamp, Adolf Benca, Ford Crull, and Loren Munk. Through Oct. 8. . . . **PHOENIX**, 568 Broadway: A show of works in various mediums by fifty-nine members of the Women in the Arts Foundation. Through Oct. 1. . . . **SCHREIBER-CUTLER**, 171 Spring St.: Paintings by Cornelia Foss, Milton Resnick, Elaine de Kooning, and others. Through Oct. 8. . . . **SHAINMAN**, 560 Broadway: A sculpture each by Alice Aycock, Magdalena Jetelová, and Susana Solano in what the gallery calls a "Dialogue with Space." Through Oct. 15. . . . **SOHO 20**, 469 Broome St.: Paintings and sculptures by Penny Kaplan, Lucy Sallick, Shirley Gorelick, and others. Through Oct. 1. (Opens at noon.) . . . **STEINBAUM**, 132 Greene St.: "Beyond the Tradition of Quiltmaking," with works by Terrie Hancock Mangat, Therese May, and collaborators Gayle Fraas and Duncan Slade. Through Oct. 4. . . . **TOLL**, 146 Greene St.: Abstract sculptures by Lillian Ball, Patrick Strzelec, and Steve Wood. Through Oct. 1.

OTHER GALLERIES

Alan Charlton—New paintings. Through Oct. 8. (Klein, 611 Broadway.)

Perry Hoberman—Wall sculptures. Through Oct. 9. (Postmasters, 66 Avenue A, near 4th St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Group Show—Works in various mediums by John Franklin, Julia Fish, Polly Apfelbaum, Mel Chin, and others. Through Oct. 9. (Loughelton, 19 Second Ave., at 1st St. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Günther Förg—Large-scale photographs of European architecture, plus watercolors. Through Oct. 1. (Luhring Augustine & Hodes, 41 E. 57th St.)

Ken Heyman—Pictures of city life by a photographer who shoots from the hip. Through Oct. 8. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Opens at noon.)

Robert Mapplethorpe—The Whitney Museum has mounted a show of his photographs. See below, under "Museums," for dates and times.

Geanna Merola—Painted photographs. Through Oct. 1. (Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

Arnold Newman—A retrospective. Through Oct. 30. (New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.) . . . ¶ Portraits of Pollock, Warhol, and Mondrian, among other works. Through Oct. 8. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Nicholas Nixon—Portraits of people with AIDS. Through Oct. 22. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays. A complementary show is at the Museum of Modern Art.)

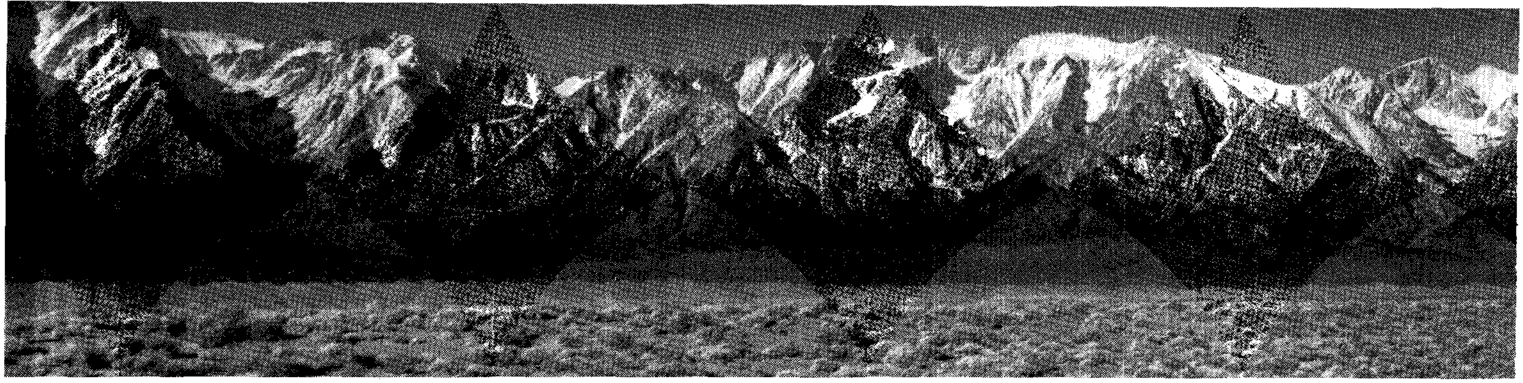
Louis Stettner—Photographs of street scenes in the United States, Mexico, and Europe, taken between 1947 and 1972. Through Oct. 22. (Photofind, 138 Spring St.)

James Welling—Photographs of draperies and diaries, and of buildings designed by H. H. Richardson. Through Oct. 15. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Don Worth—A retrospective of prints by an artist who takes closeups of cacti and tropical flowers. Through Oct. 15. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—A retrospective of works by Umberto Boccioni, an Italian Futurist painter and the only sculptor in that movement. . . . ¶ A selection of watercolors and drawings by Paul Cézanne from the last thirty years of his life. Through Nov. 6. . . . ¶ Arata Isozaki's study for the entrance to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles is among the acquisitions of architectural drawings, prints, and books on display; others range from the sixteenth century to the present and come from Europe and America. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays,



SHOES THAT HELP YOU LIVE LONGER.

Several years before marketing gurus began hailing walking as the "exercise of the 80's", we at Rockport were committed to better understanding the benefits of walking as an exercise.

So when Rob Sweetgall, who lost several members of his family to heart disease, wanted to promote the health benefits of walking by traveling across America on foot, Rockport supported him.

Financially, so doctors could monitor the effect this incredible journey was having on the human body.

And with our walking shoes, so that our engineers could better understand the effect an 11,208 mile walk was having on our products.

But as dramatic as Rob Sweetgall's walk was, for us it was just another step in our on-going commitment.

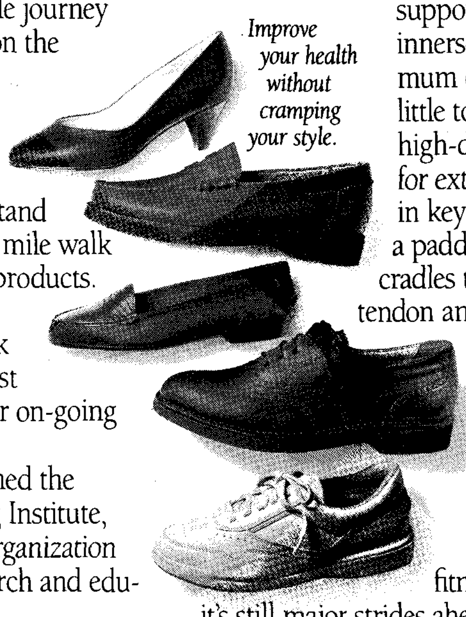
In 1985, we formed the Rockport Walking Institute, the nation's first organization dedicated to research and education on walking.

Its effects have already been felt. In articles, seminars, walking clubs, and most important of all, in the Rockport Fitness Walking Test.™

Unlike most tests, the Rockport Fitness Walking Test™ is the first designed for people who are in great shape *and* people who aren't. Giving them a way t get started on an exercise program that they can live with for years to come.

But perhaps the nicest thing to remember about Rockport's commitment to walking is that it comes built-in to every pair of walking shoes we make.

THE WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED WALKING SHOES.

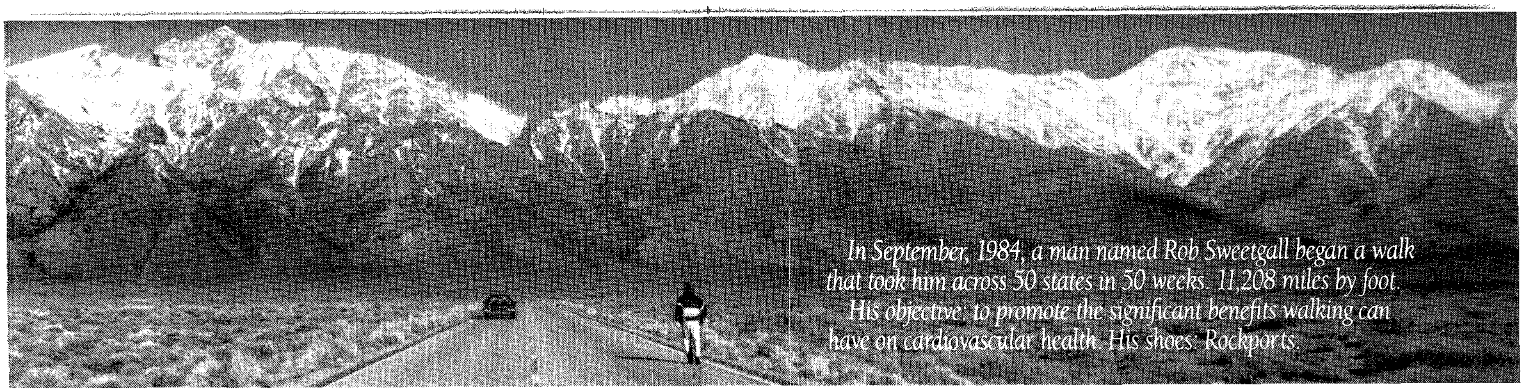


Improve your health without cramping your style.

Consider the Rockport ProWalker, which one magazine called, the "Mercedes-Benz of walking shoes."

It features innovations like a dual heel counter system for maximum support and a 3-layer innersole for maximum comfort. And little touches like high-density poron for extra cushioning in key stress points, a padded collar that cradles the achilles tendon and a seam construction that helps prevent bliste ProWalker was the first shoe designed exclusively for fitness walking. A it's still major strides ahead of anything on the market today.

Like Mercedes, Rockports come in n different models. Every one built with our exclusive Walk Support System,™ unique combination of design, materia and technology that has helped make Rockport the first shoe ever awarded the Seal of Acceptance by the American Podiatric Medical Association.



In September, 1984, a man named Rob Sweetgall began a walk that took him across 50 states in 50 weeks. 11,208 miles by foot. His objective: to promote the significant benefits walking can have on cardiovascular health. His shoes: Rockports.

YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF LIVING LONGER. BUT STILL AREN'T CRAZY ABOUT WALKING.

We understand. But we're also presumptuous enough to believe that the problem you've had isn't with walking but with the shoes you've been wearing.

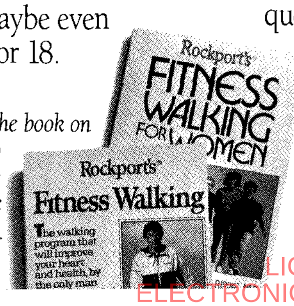
And that once you put on a pair of Rockports, you'll find them so well designed, so well engineered and so comfortable that you'll start to walk more. And enjoy it more. Maybe even lose a pound or two. Or 17 or 18.

(Don't laugh. All it takes is a 45-minute walk at a decent pace everyday).

The point is, overall, you'll start feeling a whole lot better. As you discover what 55 million people have already discovered: walking is as one cardiologist described, "the best exercise for conditioning for the vast majority of Americans."

The next step? If you have any questions, write us and we'll try and answer them. If you'd like a copy of the Rockport Fitness Walking Test, we'll send you one. If, however, you're already sold on walking then hopefully we've also sold you on something else: a pair of our walking shoes.

Short of a miracle drug being invented tomorrow, Rockports may well be the best way to start living a longer, healthier, and more enjoyable life today.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Fitness Walking
The walking program that will improve your heart and health, by the only man

Rockport has literally written the book on walking. In fact, 3 books, 4 video tapes, and 7 abstracts that were accepted by the American College of Sports Medicine.

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ART—*Cont'd*

9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesdays evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—A comprehensive show of the drawings of Philip Guston, a leading Abstract Expressionist, who, late in his career, did a series of controversial works inventorying his studio and himself. Through Nov. 1. . . . **PHOTOGRAPHY:** About a hundred prints by Nicholas Nixon. Through Nov. 13. The artist also has an exhibition at the Zabriskie Gallery, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (Open daily except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A show of works from the fifties and sixties by Americans and Europeans—Beuys, Cornell, Hesse, Oldenburg, Nevelson, and others—who went against the tide of Abstract Expressionism by using images from pop culture and unconventional materials. Starts Friday, Sept. 23. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Frank Gehry's architecture is surveyed in more than two hundred and fifty drawings, photographs, and models. The projects represented include the Fishdance Restaurant in Kobe, Japan, and the Laser Laboratory Building at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Also on display are several walk-through constructions. Through Oct. 2. . . . **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Fifteen years' worth of Robert Mapplethorpe's prints are represented in a show of nudes, portraits, and still-lifes. Through Oct. 23. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—Lithographs, etchings, and woodcuts by early-twentieth-century German Expressionists—Beckmann, Schiele, Nolde, and Kirchner among them. Through Nov. 28. . . . ¶ "The Uses of Photography in Contemporary Art," a small exhibit from the permanent collection, with works by Julie Wachtel, Ellen Carey, and David Hockney. Through Oct. 10. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—A hundred or so stone and bronze tomb artifacts with carvings (of farmers, street markets, lovers) that reflect daily life in Sichuan during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Through Nov. 12. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—In the seventeenth century, the cupboards and drawers of Burghley House, in Devonshire, were filled with Renaissance jewelry, pitchers with diamonds and rubies embedded in them, and gold and silver tableware. Sixty of these objets de vertu, preserved as heirlooms, have been brought here for display. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—An exhibit of roughly a hundred music scores by, among others, Bach, Mahler, Arthur Sullivan, and Mozart (several by the last; the work on view that he composed at age five is in his father's hand). Through Nov. 6. . . . ¶ A display of illuminated manuscripts that depict medieval and Renaissance dances and musical instruments. Through Oct. 30. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Geoffrey Beene, in the business now for twenty-five years, is being treated to a retrospective that includes not only clothes with his label but accessories, videos of fashion shows, and photographs by Horst, Richard Avedon, and others. Starts Tuesday, Sept. 20. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—Malcolm McLaren, the subject of what the museum describes as "an unconventional art exhibition," has been called many things—most generously, rock producer, fashion designer, and cultural theorist. This collection of clothes, posters, album covers, cassettes, and videotapes follows McLaren's career as it bounced from the Sex Pistols to Adam and the Ants to a British fashion/bondage shop called Let It Rock. Through Nov. 20. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library at Lincoln Center—A fortieth-anniversary salute to the New York City Ballet in which the works of set and costume designers get all the applause. On exhibit, for instance, are sets and costumes by Isamu Noguchi for Balanchine's "Orpheus" (1947) and, from the 1964 "Nutcracker," a model by Rouben Ter-Arutunian and a drawing by Karinska incorporating swatched fabric. (Open daily except Sundays. Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 10 to 8; Tuesdays, 10 to 7; Wednesdays and Fridays, noon to 6; and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

MUSIC

Metropolitan Opera—Opening performances of the season, which will run through May 6—Monday, Sept. 26, at 7: "Il Trovatore," with Eva Marton, Fiorenza Cossotto, Luciano Pavarotti, and Sherrill Milnes; conducted by James Levine. . . . ¶ Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7:30: The Metropolitan's première of Handel's "Giulio Cesare," with Kathleen Battle, Tatiana Troyanos, Martine Dupuy, Sarah Walker, and Jeffrey Gall; Trevor Pinnock will conduct a chamber orchestra. . . . ¶ Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 8: "Das Rheingold," with Ellen Shade, Hanna Schwarz, Siegfried Jerusalem, and Horst Hiestermann; James Levine. (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—Wednesday evening, Sept. 21: "Rigoletto," with Faith Esham, Susanne Marsee, Brent Ellis, and Richard Leech; conducted by Elio Boncompagni. . . . ¶ Thursday evening, Sept. 22: "Lucia di Lammermoor," with Sheryl Woods, Michael Sylvester, William Stone, and Harry Dworchak; Scott Bergeson. . . . ¶ Friday evening, Sept. 23: "Tosca," with Linda Roark-Strummer, Robert Grayson, and Julian Patrick; Elio Boncompagni. . . . ¶ Saturday matinée, Sept. 24: "La Traviata," with Frances Ginsberg, Stephen O'Mara, and Ron Peo; Joseph Colaneri. . . . ¶ Saturday evening, Sept. 24: "Madame Butterfly," with Young Mi Kim, Cynthia Rose, Stefano Algieri, and William Parcher; Scott Bergeson. . . . ¶ Sunday matinée, Sept. 25: "Rasputin," with Margaret Cusack, John Cheek, Jon Garrison, and Henry Price; Christopher Keene. . . . ¶ Sunday evening, Sept. 25: "Die Zauberflöte," with Elizabeth Hynes, Virginia Sublett, Paul Austin Kelly, and Jan Opalach; Scott Bergeson. . . . ¶ Tuesday evening, Sept. 27: "The Merry Widow," with Leigh Munro, Susanne Marsee, Richard White, and Michael Cousins; Imre Pallo. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8, and Sundays at 7. Matinées Saturdays at 2 and Sundays at 1. Through Sunday, Nov. 20.)

New York Philharmonic—Zubin Mehta conducting Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" and his Third Symphony. With Montserrat Caballé, soprano; Sam Waterston, narrator; the New York Choral Artists (Joseph Flummerfelt directing); and the American Boychoir (James Litton directing). (Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Thursday, Sept. 22, at 8; Friday, Sept. 23, at 2; and Saturday, Sept. 24, and Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8.)

Eve Olitsky

Philadelphia Orchestra—Riccardo Muti conducting a benefit program of music by Shostakovich and Prokofiev, with Viktoria Mullova, violin; Alexandrina Milcheva, mezzo-soprano; and the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, Seán Deibler, directing. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7:30.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Lukas Foss conducting, with James Galway, flute. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Friday and Saturday, Sept. 23-24, at 8, and Sunday, Sept. 25, at 2.)

Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp conducting, with Stephanie Brown, piano. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8.)

American String Quartet—The first in a series of concerts presenting the complete Beethoven quartets. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Thursday, Sept. 22, at 8. For information about tickets, call 749-2802.)

Peking Opera—Presenting two programs of short operas from the traditional Chinese repertory. (Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 488-1715. Saturday, Sept. 24, at 7.)

An Evening of French Ballet Music—The New York Baroque Dance Company presenting the 1737 ballet "Les Elémens" and a staged version of "Apollon, la Nuit et Comus," an eighteenth-century work that combines dance, song, and instrumental music. With the Concert Royal Orchestra, conducted by James Richman. (Florence Gould Hall, French Institute–Alliance Française, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6105. Friday, Sept. 23, at 8, and Sunday, Sept. 25, at 3.)

SPORTS

(The ticket-information number for Madison Square Garden is 563-8300, for the Meadowlands 1-201 935-3900, for Nassau Coliseum 1-516 587-9222, for Shea Stadium 1-718 507-8499, and for Yankee Stadium 293-6000.)

Baseball—**YANKEES** at Yankee Stadium: Vs. Baltimore, Monday through Wednesday, Sept. 19-21, at 7:30. . . . ¶ Boston, Friday and Saturday, Sept. 23-24, at 7:30, and Sunday, Sept. 25, at 1:30. . . . **METS** at Shea Stadium: Vs. Philadelphia, Tuesday through Thursday, Sept. 20-22, at 7:35.

Football—Giants vs. Los Angeles Rams. (Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. Sunday, Sept. 25, at 4.)

Hockey—Exhibition games—At **NASSAU COLISEUM:** Islanders vs. Montreal Canadiens, Tuesday, Sept. 20, at 8:05. . . . ¶ Islanders vs. Boston Bruins, Saturday, Sept. 24, at 7:05. . . . ¶ Islanders vs. Rangers, Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8:05. . . . **BYRNE MEADOWLANDS ARENA:** Devils vs. Rangers, Saturday, Sept. 24, at 1:30. . . . ¶ Devils vs. Hartford Whalers, Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7:45. . . . **MADISON SQUARE GARDEN:** Rangers vs. Devils, Sunday, Sept. 25, at 7:30. . . . ¶ Rangers vs. Islanders, Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 7:30.

Racing—At **BELMONT:** Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1; through Monday, Oct. 17. The Man o' War, Saturday, Sept. 24. . . . **MEADOWLANDS:** Weeknights at 7:30. The Pegasus Handicap, Friday, Sept. 23.

Trotting—At Yonkers Raceway: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8.

Yachting—The twenty-second annual Mayor's Cup schooner race in New York Harbor. The starting gun will go off at eleven Saturday, Sept. 24. Battery Park will afford good views of the beginning and the end of the race.

ET ALIA

Poetry Readings—Zbigniew Herbert reading from his own works, in Polish, with English translations read by Susan Sontag. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Walking Tour—A guided tour of the Upper East Side, sponsored by the New-York Historical Society, will be given on Sunday, Sept. 25 (rain or shine), starting in front of the Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St., at 2. Tickets can be purchased at the time of the tour.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171; theatre opens in the late afternoon and is closed Mondays.)
Through Sept. 22: "Doc's Kingdom" (1987; directed by Robert Kramer), with Paul McIsaac and Vincent Gallo.
From Sept. 23: (Separate admissions) "Doc's Kingdom;" and "Commissar" (1967; Alexander Askoldov; in Russian).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Die Hard" (†). From Sept. 23: "Sweet Hearts Dance" (Robert Greenwald), with Don Johnson, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Daniels, and Elizabeth Perkins.
Theatre 2: "The Beast" (Kevin Reynolds), with George Dzundza, Jason Patric, and Steven Bauer.
Theatre 3: "Betrayed" (Costa-Gavras), with Debra Winger and Tom Berenger.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Sept. 22: "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" (†).
From Sept. 23: "Dead Ringers" (David Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through Sept. 22: "Moon Over Parador" (†).
From Sept. 23: To be announced.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Married to the Mob" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Fish Called Wanda" (†).
Theatre 3: "Tucker: The Man and His Dream" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam" (Bill Couturie), a documentary.

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Through Sept. 22: "The Deceivers" (Nicholas Meyer), with Pierce Brosnan.
From Sept. 23: "Ground Zero" (Michael Pattinson and Bruce Myles), with Colin Friels, Jack Thompson, and Donald Pleasence.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Sept. 22: "Big" (†).
From Sept. 23: "Dead Ringers" (David Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Midnight Run" (†). From Sept. 23: 'Moon Over Parador" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Beast" (Kevin Reynolds), with George Dzundza, Jason Patric, and Steven Bauer.

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)
Through Sept. 22: "Track 29" (Nicolas Roeg), with Theresa Russell and Gary Oldman.
From Sept. 23: "Kansas" (David Stevens), with Matt Dillon and Andrew McCarthy.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Die Hard" (†).
Theatre 2: "Running on Empty" (†).

Cinema I and II, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022/0774)
Theatre 1: Theatre closed.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Tucker: The Man and His Dream" (†). From Sept. 23: "Tiger Warsaw" (Amin Q. Chaudhri), with Patrick Swayze.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Rocket Gibraltar" (Daniel Petrie), with Burt Lancaster. From Sept. 23: "Patty Hearst" (Paul Schrader), with Natasha Richardson.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Betrayed" (Costa-Gavras), with Debra Winger and Tom Berenger. From Sept. 23: "Sweet Hearts Dance" (Robert Greenwald), with Don Johnson, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Daniels, and Elizabeth Perkins.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
Through Sept. 22: "Moon Over Parador" (†).

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 27.

From Sept. 23: "Gorillas in the Mist" (Michael Apted), with Sigourney Weaver.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Married to the Mob" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Fish Called Wanda" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
Through Sept. 22: "The Prince of Pennsylvania" (Ron Nyswaner), with Fred Ward, Keanu Reeves, Bonnie Bedelia, and Amy Madigan.
From Sept. 23: To be announced.

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Eight Men Out" (John Sayles).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Messenger of Death" (J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson.

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Tougher Than Leather" (Rick Rubin), with Run-D.M.C. From Sept. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Coming to America" (John Landis), with Eddie Murphy. From Sept. 23: "Patty Hearst" (Paul Schrader), with Natasha Richardson.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Die Hard" (†). From Sept. 23: "Kansas" (David Stevens), with Matt Dillon and Andrew McCarthy.
Theatre 2: "Betrayed" (Costa-Gavras), with Debra Winger and Tom Berenger.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I and 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatres open in the late afternoon.)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 27: "The Love Child" (1987; directed by Robert Smith). From Sept. 28: "Nanou" (1987; Conny Templeman), with Imogen Stubbs, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, and Daniel Day-Lewis.
Theatre 2: See listings under "Revival Houses."

Bleecker St. Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: "Bandits" (Claude Lelouch; in French).
Theatre 2: "Mama Turns 100" (Carlos Saura; in Spanish), with Geraldine Chaplin.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Big" (†). From Sept. 23: To be announced.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
"Running on Empty" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Moon Over Parador" (†).
Theatre 2: "Midnight Run" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Babette's Feast" (†).
Theatre 2: "Track 29" (Nicolas Roeg), with Theresa Russell and Gary Oldman.
Theatre 3: Through Sept. 22: "The Deceivers" (Nicholas Meyer), with Pierce Brosnan. From Sept. 23: "Patty Hearst" (Paul Schrader), with Natasha Richardson.
Theatre 4: Through Sept. 22: "A World Apart" (†). From Sept. 23: Patty Hearst."

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Coming to America" (John Landis), with Eddie Murphy. From Sept. 23: "Kansas" (David Stevens), with Matt Dillon and Andrew McCarthy.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Midnight Run" (†). From Sept. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 3: Through Sept. 22: "Messenger of Death" (J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson. From Sept. 23: To be announced.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Eight Men Out" (John Sayles).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"The Last Temptation of Christ" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
Through Sept. 22: "Bull Durham" (†).
From Sept. 23: "Big" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through Sept. 22: "The Wizard of Loneliness" (Jenny Bowen), with Lukas Haas.
From Sept. 23: "Kansas" (David Stevens), with Matt Dillon and Andrew McCarthy.

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"Moon Over Parador" (†).

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"Bandits" (Claude Lelouch; in French).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
"Miles from Home" (Gary Sinise), with Richard Gere and Kevin Anderson.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
Through Sept. 22: "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" (†).
From Sept. 23: To be announced.

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Eight Men Out" (John Sayles).

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "The Thin Blue Line" (†).
Theatre 2: "Bagdad Café" (†).
Theatre 3: "Boyfriends and Girlfriends" ("L'Ami de Mon Amie") (†).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "Matador" (†).
Theatre 2: "Wings of Desire" ("Der Himmel über Berlin") (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"The Beast" (Kevin Reynolds), with George Dzundza, Jason Patric, and Steven Bauer.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Betrayed" (Costa-Gavras), with Debra Winger and Tom Berenger.
Theatre 2: "A Fish Called Wanda" (†).
Theatre 3: "Crossing Delancey" (Joan Micklin Silver), with Amy Irving and Peter Riegert.
Theatre 4: Through Sept. 22: "Tucker: The Man and His Dream" (†). From Sept. 23 (tentative): "Kansas" (David Stevens), with Matt Dillon and Andrew McCarthy.
Theatre 5: Through Sept. 22: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master" (Renny Harlin), with Robert Englund. From Sept. 23 (tentative): "Sweet Hearts Dance" (Robert Greenwald), with Don Johnson, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Daniels, and Elizabeth Perkins.
Theatre 6: "Married to the Mob" (†).

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Die Hard" (†). From Sept. 23: "Dead Ringers" (David

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold.
Theatre 2: "Moon Over Parador" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Midnight Run" (†). From Sept. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 2: "Running on Empty" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Coming to America" (directed by John Landis), with Eddie Murphy.
Theatre 2: "Messenger of Death" (J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson.
Theatre 3: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master" (Renny Harlin), with Robert Englund.
Theatre 4: "Young Guns" (Christopher Cain), with Emilio Estevez.
Theatre 5: "Die Hard" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Sept. 22: "Hero and the Terror" (William Tannen), with Chuck Norris. From Sept. 23: "Sweet Hearts Dance" (Robert Greenwald), with Don Johnson, Susan Sarandon, Jeff Daniels, and Elizabeth Perkins.

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (757-2408)
"Betrayed" (Costa-Gavras), with Debra Winger and Tom Berenger.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Married to the Mob" (†). From Sept. 23: "Patty Hearst" (Paul Schrader), with Natasha Richardson.
Theatre 3: "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Sept. 22: "The Deceivers" (Nicholas Meyer), with Pierce Brosnan. From Sept. 23: "Married to the Mob" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Tougher Than Leather" (Rick Rubin), with Run-D.M.C.

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)
"Seven Hours to Judgment" (Beau Bridges), with Bridges and Ron Leibman.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Sept. 22: "Running on Empty" (†). From Sept. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Through Sept. 22: "Midnight Run" (†). From Sept. 23: "Dead Ringers" (David Cronenberg), with Jeremy Irons and Geneviève Bujold.

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)
Through Sept. 22: "The Dead Pool" (Buddy Van Horn), with Clint Eastwood.
From Sept. 23: "Midnight Run" (†).

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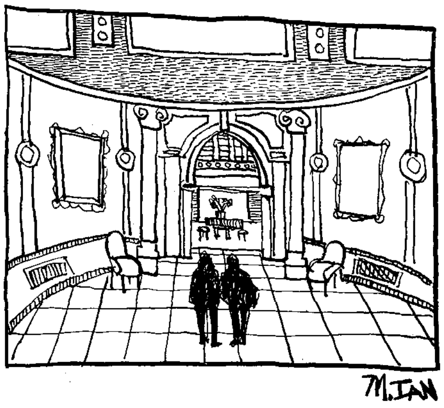
REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Sept. 19: "Idiot's Delight" (1939; directed by Clarence Brown), with Norma Shearer and Clark Gable; and "Private Lives" (1931; Sidney Franklin), with Norma Shearer, Robert Montgomery, and Reginald Denny.
Sept. 20-21: "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" (1936; Frank Capra), with Jean Arthur and Gary Cooper; and "Too Many Husbands" (1940; Wesley Ruggles), with Fred MacMurray, Jean Arthur, and Melvyn Douglas.
Sept. 22-24: "The Seven Year Itch" (1955; Billy Wilder), with Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Victor Moore, Evelyn Keyes, and Sonny Tufts; and "Bus Stop" (1956; Joshua Logan), with Marilyn Monroe, Don Murray, Arthur O'Connell, Betty Field, and Eileen Heckart.
Sept. 25-26: "Twentieth Century" (1934; Howard Hawks), with John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, and Ralph Forbes; and "She Married Her Boss" (†).
Sept. 27-28: "Café Metropole" (1937; Edward H. Griffith), with Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Adolphe Menjou, and Helen Westley; and "Wife, Husband, and Friend" (1939; Gregory Ratoff), with Loretta Young, Warner Baxter, and Cesar Romero.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Sept. 20: "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" (1974; Sam Peckinpah), with Warren Oates; and "Ride the High Country" (1962; Sam Peckinpah), with Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott.
Sept. 21-22: "Angel Heart" (1987; Alan Parker), with Mickey Rourke, Robert De Niro, Lisa Bonet, and Charlotte Rampling; and "9½ Weeks" (1986; Adrian Lyne), with Mickey Rourke and Kim Basinger.
Sept. 23-24: "Fellini Satyricon" (1970; Federico Fellini; in Italian); and "And the Ship Sails On" (1983; Federico Fellini; in Italian).
Sept. 25: "Marriage—Italian Style" (1964) and "Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" (1964), both films directed by Vittorio De Sica, in Italian, with Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni.
Sept. 26-27: "Singin' in the Rain" (†); and "The Band Wagon" (1953; Vincente Minnelli), with Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, and Nanette Fabray.
From Sept. 28: "The Arabian Nights" (1973; Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian); and "The Canterbury Tales" (1972; Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian), with Hugh Griffith, Alan Webb, and Jenny Runacre.

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590; Mondays through Fridays, theatre opens in the late afternoon.)
Sept. 19: "Polyester" (1981; John Waters), with Divine and Tab Hunter; and "Macabre" (1958; William Castle), with William Prince and Jim Backus.
Sept. 20: "Paradisio" (1962; in 3-D); and "The 4D Man" (1959; Irvin S. Yeaworth, Jr.), with Robert Lansing.
Sept. 21-22: "The Maze" (1953; William Cameron Menzies; in 3-D), with Richard Carlson; and "The Mask" (1961; Julian Roffman), with Paul Stevens.
Sept. 23-24: "Mantrap" (1926; Victor Fleming; a silent film), with Clara Bow; and "Show People" (1928; King Vidor; a silent film), with Marion Davies.
Sept. 25: "Pandora's Box" (1928; G. W. Pabst; a German silent film), with Louise Brooks; and "Prix de Beauté" (1930; Augusto Genina; in French), with Louise Brooks.
Sept. 26: "Whoopee" (1930; Thornton Freeland), with Eddie Cantor, Eleanor Hunt, Paul Gregory, and Jack Rutherford; "Kid Boots" (1926; Frank Tuttle; a silent film), with Eddie Cantor and Clara Bow; and "Ella Cinders" (1926; Alfred E. Greene; a silent film), with Colleen Moore and Lloyd Hughes.
Sept. 27: "A Girl in Every Port" (1928; Howard Hawks; a silent film), with Victor McLaglen, Robert Armstrong, and Louise Brooks; "Fazil" (1928; Howard Hawks; a silent film), with Greta Nissen and Charles Farrell; and "Down to the Sea in Ships" (1922; Elmer Clifton; a silent film), with Elizabeth Foley.
Sept. 28: "Virtue" (1932; Eddie Buzzell), with Carole Lombard and Pat O'Brien; and "Ladies of Leisure" (†).

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)
Sept. 19: "The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond" (1960; Budd Boetticher), with Ray Danton; and "The Killer Is Loose" (1956; Budd Boetticher), with Joseph Cotten and Rhonda Fleming.



Sept. 20: "Murder, He Says" (1945; George Marshall), with Fred MacMurray, Helen Walker, and Marjorie Main; and "Unfaithfully Yours" (1948; Preston Sturges), with Rex Harrison and Linda Darnell.
Sept. 21: "Hollywood Story" (1951; William Castle), with Richard Conte; and "Sunset Boulevard" (1950; Billy Wilder), with Gloria Swanson, William Holden, and Erich von Stroheim.
Sept. 22: "Goldfinger" (1964; Guy Hamilton) and "From Russia with Love" (1964; Terence Young), both with Sean Connery as James Bond.
Sept. 23-24: "Wild Strawberries" (1957; Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Victor Sjöström, Ingrid Thulin, and Gunnar Björnstrand; and "Persona" (1967; Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann.
Sept. 25: "The Golden Coach" (1953; Jean Renoir), with Anna Magnani; and "Teresa Venerdi" (1951; Vittorio De Sica; in Italian), with Anna Magnani and De Sica.
Sept. 26: "Went the Day Well?" (1942; Alberto Cavalcanti), with Leslie Banks, Elizabeth Allen, Frank Lawton, and Basil Sydney; and "Millions Like Us" (1943; Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat), with Patricia Roc, Eric Portman, and Gordon Jackson.
Sept. 27: "Fail Safe" (1964; Sidney Lumet), with Henry Fonda, Dan O'Herlihy, Walter Matthau, and Frank Overton; and "Dr. Strangelove" (1964; Stanley Kubrick), with Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, and Sterling Hayden.
Sept. 28: "Elmer Gantry" (†) and "The Miracle" (†).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Sept. 19: "Les Visiteurs du Soir" (1942; "The Devil's Envoys;" Marcel Carné; in French), with Jules Berry, Marie Déa, and Alain Cuny; and "La Ronde" (1950; Max Ophuls; in French), with Gérard Philipe, Danielle Darrieux, Simone Signoret, and Jean-Louis Barrault.
Sept. 20: "Scarlet Street" (1946; Fritz Lang), with Joan Bennett, Edward G. Robinson, and Dan Duryea; and "Man Hunt" (1941; Fritz Lang), with Joan Bennett, Walter Pidgeon, George Sanders, and John Carradine.
Sept. 21: "Ride the High Country" (1962; Sam Peckinpah), with Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott; and "Junior Bonner" (1972; Sam Peckinpah), with Steve McQueen, Robert Preston, and Ida Lupino.
Sept. 22: "The Old Maid" (†); and "A Stolen Life" (1946; Curtis Bernhardt), with Bette Davis, Glenn Ford, Dane Clark, and Walter Brennan.
Sept. 23-24: "The Red House" (1947; Delmer Daves), with Edward G. Robinson, Lon McCallister, and Judith Anderson; and "D.O.A." (1950; Rudolph Maté), with Edmond O'Brien.
Sept. 25: "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" (1938; Ernst Lubitsch), with Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, David Niven, and Herman Bing; and "That Uncertain Feeling" (1941; Ernst Lubitsch), with Merle Oberon, Melvyn Douglas, and Burgess Meredith.
Sept. 26: "Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II" (1944-46; Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian), with Nikolai Cherkassov.
Sept. 27: "Rio Rita" (1929; Luther Reed), with Bebe Daniels, John Boles, Bert Wheeler, and Robert Woolsey; and "Sunny" (1930; William A. Seiter), with Marilyn Miller.
Sept. 28: "Breaker Morant" (1980; Bruce Beresford), with Edward Woodward; and "Gallipoli" (1981; Peter Weir), with Mel Gibson, Mark Lee, and Bill Kerr.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490; a limited number of tickets are available to those applying for them in person at the museum after 11 on the day of the showing.)
THEATRE I: Sept. 19 at 2:30: "Pastor Hall"

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

(1940; directed by Roy Boulting), with Wilfrid Lawson, Bernard Miles, and Nova Pilbeam. . . . ¶ Sept. 19 at 6: "Underground" (1928; Anthony Asquith; a silent film), with Elissa Landi and Brian Aherne. . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 2:30: "We Dive at Dawn" (1943; Anthony Asquith), with Eric Portman, John Mills, and Niall MacGinnis. . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 6: "The Gentle Sex" (1943; Leslie Howard and Maurice Elvey), with Jean Gillie, Joan Greenwood, and Joyce Howard. . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 12:30: A program of eighty-five award-winning British commercials for film and television made in 1987. . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 3: "Night and the City" (1950; Jules Dassin), with Richard Widmark, Gene Tierney, and Googie Withers. . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 6:30 and Sept. 23 at 12:30: A program of eighty-five award-winning British commercials for film and television made in 1987. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 3: "2,000 Women" (1944; Frank Launder), with Phyllis Calvert, Patricia Roc, and Flora Robson. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 6: A program of eighty-five award-winning British commercials for film and television made in 1987. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 1: "They Knew Mr. Knight" (1945; Norman Walker), with Mervyn Johns, Alfred Drayton, and Nora Swinburne. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 3: A program of eighty-five award-winning British commercials for film and television made in 1987. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 5: "Millions Like Us" (1943; Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat), with Patricia Roc, Eric Portman, and Gordon Jackson. . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 1: "The Gentle Sex." . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 3: "Blue Scar" (1948; Jill Craigie), with Gwyneth Vaughan, Emrys Jones, and Rachel Thomas. . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 5: "2,000 Women." . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 2:30: "The Brave Don't Cry" (1952; Philip Leacock), with John Gregson and Meg Buchanan. . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 6: "Blue Scar." . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 2:30: "White Corridors" (1951; Pat Jackson), with Googie Withers, Petula Clarke, and James Donald. . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 6: "They Made Me a Fugitive" (1947; Alberto Cavalcanti), with Trevor Howard, Griffith Jones, and Sally Gray.

THEATRE 2: Theatre closed.

New York Film Festival—The first programs in a seventeen-day series of international films—At **ALICE TULLY HALL:** Sept. 23 at 7:45: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (Pedro Almodóvar; Spain). . . . **AVERY FISHER HALL:** Sept. 23 at 9: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown." . . . **ALICE TULLY HALL:** Sept. 24 at 1: "Felix" (Helma Sanders-Brahms, Helke Sander, Margarethe von Trotta, and Christel Buschmann; West Germany). . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 3:30: "Asya's Happiness" (1967; Andrei Konchalovsky; U.S.S.R.). . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 6: "Mapantsula" (Oliver Schmitz; South Africa). . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 9: "High Hopes" (Mike Leigh; Great Britain). . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 2: "Mapantsula." . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 4:30: "High Hopes." . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 7: "Felix." . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 9:30 and Sept. 26 at 6:15: "La Maschera" (Fiorella Infascelli; Italy). . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 9:15 and Sept. 27 at 6:15: "Bird" (Clint Eastwood; United States). . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 9:30 and Sept. 28 at 6:15: "The Man with Three Coffins" (Lee Chang-Ho; South Korea). . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 9:15: "The Last of England" (Derek Jarman; Great Britain). (For tickets, call 362-1911.)

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—Through Oct. 6: "Woody Allen: The Television Work," featuring "The Kraft Music Hall: Woody Allen Looks at 1967" and a compilation of performances by and conversations with Allen from 1962 to 1977. Showings Tuesdays through Saturdays at 12:05, 1:45, and 3:30.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—This new museum, devoted to the art, history, and technology of film, television, and video, has mounted a permanent exhibition called "Behind the Screen: Producing, Promoting, and Exhibiting Motion Pictures and Television," which includes "Tut's Fever," an installation by Red Grooms and Lysiane Luong. (Museum hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1 to 5; Fridays, 1 to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 8; and Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Riklis Theatre: Sept. 21 at 2:30: "The Eddie Duchin Story" (1956; George Sidney), with Tyrone Power and Kim Novak. . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 2:30: "Captain from Castile" (1947; Henry King), with Tyrone Power and Jean Peters. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 2:30: "El Dorado" (1967; Howard Hawks), with John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, and James Caan. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 7:30: "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (1943; Sam Wood), with Ingrid Bergman and Gary Cooper. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 12:30: "The Phantom of the Opera" (1943; Arthur Lubin), with Claude Rains, Nelson Eddy, and Susanna Foster. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 3: "Captain from Castile." . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 7:30: "Leave Her to Heaven" (1945; John M. Stahl), with Gene Tierney and Cornel Wilde. . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 12:30: "The Band Wagon" (1953; Vincente Minnelli), with Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, and Nanette Fabray. . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 3: "The Black Swan" (1942; Henry King), with Tyrone Power and Maureen O'Hara. . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 2:30: "Summertime" (1955; David Lean), with Katharine Hepburn and Rossano Brazzi.

Warner Communications Screening Room: Through Oct. 7: Continuous showings of forty-six videotapes on the subject of the media and the Vietnam War.

Collective for Living Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2111)—Through Sept. 22, showings at 7: "Dolly, Lotte & Maria" (1988; Rosa von Praunheim), a documentary on the German artists Dolly Haas, Lotte Goslar, and Maria Piscator. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 8: A program of films by Lewis Klahr, who will be present. . . . ¶ Sept. 24-25 at 8: A program of American Film Institute videos. . . . ¶ Sept. 26-28 at 7: Three different programs of avant-garde films.

Asia Society, 725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (517-2742)—A program of films from Hong Kong, in Cantonese, with English and Chinese subtitles. Sept. 23 at 3: "Mr. Vampire" (1986; Lau Kun Wai). . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 7: "A Chinese Ghost Story" (1987; Ching Siu-tung). . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 3: "Project A—II" (1988; Jackie Chan). . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 7: "Just Like Weather" (1986; Allen Fong).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(Unsigned notes are by Pauline Kael; others are by Terrence Rafferty.)

Babette's Feast—In a village on Denmark's gray, blustery Jutland peninsula, sometime in the eighteen-eighties, Babette (Stéphane Audran), the French servant of a pair of elderly unmarried sisters (Birgitte Federspiel and Bodil Kjer), prepares a special dinner for her employers and their guests—a lavish, one-time-only orgy of haute cuisine served to a group of devout Lutherans who are used to receiving the Lord's bounty in the form of grim little slabs of boiled fish. Adapting one of Isak Dinesen's "Anecdotes of Destiny," Gabriel Axel, the writer-director, tells this simple tale simply. He establishes a lulling, bedtime-story tone right from the start, perhaps too successfully: our eyelids begin to seem very heavy after twenty minutes or so. The whole thing turns out to be about the consolations of art, and the union of "righteousness and bliss." The film is more righteous than blissful: a more austere celebration of the pleasures of the senses would be difficult to imagine. In Danish and French. —T.R. (Quad Cinema.)

Bagdad Café—After an argument with her husband on a godforsaken stretch of highway at the edge of the Mojave Desert, a fat German tourist named Jasmin (Marianne Sägebrecht) checks into a crummy motel attached to the equally crummy Bagdad Café. This movie, the first in English by the German director Percy Adlon (whose 1985 "Sugarbaby" was also a vehicle for Sägebrecht), is filled with eccentrics who are apparently meant to be lovable. The rather precious conceit of the film is that Jasmin somehow brings the outcast characters together in a kind of extended family; by the end, the Bagdad Café has been transformed into a popular roadside cabaret, with everyone contributing a specialty (Jasmin does magic tricks). The American performers are trapped in a movie that treats them as merely exotic—waxwork grotesques waiting to be animated by a mysterious German touch. Eleonore Adlon and Christopher Doherty collaborated with the director on the screenplay. With CCH Pounder, Jack Palance, and Christine Kaufmann.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)

Big—A formula fantasy film that has been directed very gently and tactfully by Penny Marshall; she sleepwalks you through the script (by Gary Ross and Anne Spielberg) about a twelve-year-old boy who wishes he were big and is magically given the body of a man in his thirties—Tom Hanks. There are neat, flaky moments, but everything has a tepid inevitability, and even as you smile you may be groaning inwardly, because "Big" is dedicated to awakening the child in all of us. Of course, the Hanks character isn't ready to function as an adult; he wants to go back. The movie wants to go back, too. It's nostalgic for childhood, for suburbia, for innocent fun. (It isn't about kids wanting to be big; it's about grownups feeling little.) In its wholesome way, "Big" is selling the slick wonders of immaturity. With the slyly sexy Elizabeth Perkins, and good comic work by Robert Loggia and Jared Rushton. Also with John Heard, David Moscow, Jon Lovitz, and Mercedes Ruehl. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/27/88.) (Gotham Cinema, and Waverly; through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ Festival; starting Sept. 23.)

Boyfriends and Girlfriends ("L'Ami de Mon Amie")—The sixth, and last, in Eric Rohmer's series of "Comedies and Proverbs" is a light romantic comedy set in Cergy-Pontoise, an overdesigned and self-contained modern suburb of Paris. In this bourgeois Forest of Arden, four completely unremarkable young people—two women, two men—reshuffle their affections so that each winds up with the "right" partner in the end. It's essentially the same leisurely comedy of self-knowledge that Rohmer has been making for nearly twenty years, but this time he treats his themes with a frivolous, casual air. He takes pleasure in the cleanness and brightness of this world, in the contented buzz of shoppers and office workers and Sunday picnickers, in the forthright way his characters pursue their comforts. "Boyfriends and Girlfriends" is fluff: it's artificial without being oppressive—a graceful, friendly abstraction. With Emmanuelle Chaulet, Sophie Renoir, François-Eric Gendron, and Eric Viellard. In French.—T.R. (7/25/88) (Lincoln Plaza.)

Bull Durham—Written and directed by Ron Shelton, this sunny romantic comedy has the kind of dizzying off-center literacy that Preston Sturges' pictures had. It's a satirical celebration of our native jauntiness and wit; it takes us into a subculture that's like a bawdy adjunct of childhood—minor-league baseball. Kevin Costner plays the smart, hyper-articulate catcher Crash, and comes through with his first wide-awake, star performance; at his best, he's as berserkly ironic as Jack Nicholson is at some of his peaks. After playing for twelve years, Crash arrives in Durham, North Carolina, to join the Durham Bulls and learns that he's been brought in to train baby-faced Nuke (Tim Robbins), a wild young rookie pitcher who is destined to move up. Susan Sarandon plays the beautiful, passionate Annie Savoy, a baseball fanatic who has her own scorecard: "There's never been a ballplayer slept with me who didn't have the best year of his career." What you keep reacting to is the film's exuberant doodles. (6/27/88) (Festival; through Sept. 22.)

Die Hard—A formula action picture, but with the extra-potency formula. It has the sweatiest hero, the most sinister bad guys (with the thickest foreign accents), the silliest plot

IN BRIEF–Cont'd

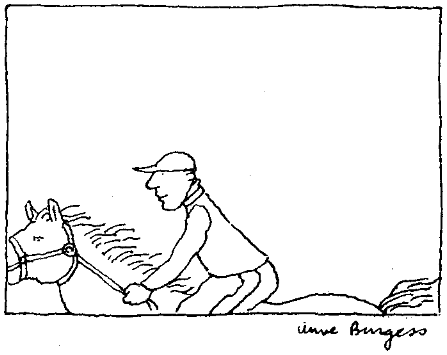
twists, the loudest explosions, the most gratuitous bursts of machine-gun fire. Bruce Willis plays John McClane, a New York cop battling a group of European terrorists who are holding his wife (Bonnie Bedelia) and her co-workers hostage on the thirtieth floor of a gleaming L.A. skyscraper (actually the Fox Plaza in Century City). The action is so grandiose and relentless that it's funny. The director, John McTiernan, has the right style for this sort of cheerfully stupid, super-kinetic comic-book violence. The problem with "Die Hard" isn't so much the physical overkill of the production as the emotional overkill of the script (by Jeb Stuart and Steven E. de Souza, from a novel by Roderick Thorp). By the end, there has been so much onscreen applause for McClane that the picture's "humanity" seems narcissistic and fake, like Oscar-night sentimentality. Also with Alan Rickman, who gives the character of the terrorists' leader a wonderful slimy elegance.—T.R. (8/8/88) (Baronet, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 86th Street East Twin, and Metro Cinema; through Sept. 22.)

Elmer Gantry (1960)—Burt Lancaster and Jean Simmons as Bible Belt evangelists in the *nineteen-twenties, in a loud, striking, big-*scale melodrama based on the Sinclair Lewis novel about con artists, adapted and directed by Richard Brooks. The movie cheats on the issues, and it's overloaded with gigantic sets, enormous crowds, fires, riots, and human stampedes. But it's coarsely compelling and—though exhausting—never boring. When Lancaster plays a kinetic, broadly exaggerated character like the lecher Gantry, you can't take your eyes off him, and Simmons is one of the most quietly commanding actresses Hollywood has ever trashed. With Shirley Jones, Edward Andrews, Arthur Kennedy, Dean Jagger, and Patti Page. (Thalia SoHo; Sept. 28.)

A Fish Called Wanda—This caper comedy promises to embody the best of two different styles of British humor: its director, the seventy-seven-year-old Charles Crichton, made "The Lavender Hill Mob," one of the greatest of the Ealing comedies, and its writer, executive producer, and star, the towering John Cleese, was a member of the Monty Python group and the creator of the hilarious television series "Fawlty Towers." Its main characters are a very proper London barrister (Cleese) and three jewel thieves: a crafty, sexy American woman named Wanda (Jamie Lee Curtis); another American, Otto (Kevin Kline), who's violently Anglophobic and dumb as dirt; and Ken (the ex-Pythonite Michael Palin), a deranged stutterer who's perfectly happy to bump off old ladies but becomes inconsolable at the death of a small dog or a tropical fish. The movie has a fair number of laughs, but Crichton's direction is too drab and poky for the material. Every time "Wanda" threatens to take off into the realm of insane, head-splitting farce, as "Fawlty Towers" so often did, something seems to drag it down—some impulse toward stability and restraint, at odds with the script's spirit of manic invention.—T.R. (7/25/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Ladies of Leisure (1930)—Though she came from the theatre, Barbara Stanwyck seemed to have an intuitive understanding of the fluid physical movements that work best on camera; perhaps she had been an unusually "natural" actress even onstage. This was her first big hit in the movies. Under Frank Capra's direction, she plays a tough "party" girl (euphemism for call girl) who poses for a wealthy young artist (Ralph Graves); he sees in her the spirituality that she attempts to deny. The story is a museum piece of early-*talkies sentimentality, but, in a way, that* only emphasizes Stanwyck's remarkable modernism. With Marie Prevost, Lowell Sherman, Juliette Compton, and Nance O'Neil. (Film Forum 2; Sept. 28.)

The Last Temptation of Christ—Martin Scorsese's film is based on an intense, rather ponderous novel by Nikos Kazantzakis that portrays Christ as a tormented prophet who has to choose between his human nature and his divine nature—who in order to fulfill his role



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as redeemer must reject the overpowering temptation to be merely a man. If we respond to anything in this movie it's to the idea of Scorsese wrestling with Kazantzakis's conception, thrashing manfully among the tangles of the novel's dense prose, trying to isolate some clear, intelligible meaning from this *religious fever-dream.* Scorsese hasn't managed to come up with a consistent visual style for the story, and the movie's intensity, over a span of two hours and forty minutes, is sputtering, fitful. The scenes meant to evoke the natural—the human—side of the story don't have much charge, and most of the actors look uncomfortable. (The drab modern idiom of Paul Schrader's dialogue is at least part of the problem.) This movie isn't a sacrilege; it's just an honorable mistake. With Willem Dafoe as Jesus, Harvey Keitel as Judas, Barbara Hershey as Mary Magdalene, and David Bowie as Pontius Pilate. Peter Gabriel composed the music.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Ziegfeld.)

Married to the Mob—Angela (Michelle Pfeiffer), the heroine of Jonathan Demme's crazy comedy, is married to an up-and-coming suburban gangster known as Frank the Cucumber (Alec Baldwin), and she doesn't feel good about her life; she's avid for ordinariness. When Frank is murdered by his boss, Tony the Tiger (Dean Stockwell), Angela gives away virtually the entire contents of her Long Island house and moves herself and her reluctant son into a cramped Lower East Side apartment, hoping that the mob will forget about her. Unfortunately, Tony the Tiger has the hots for her, the F.B.I. is tailing her, and Tony's insanely jealous wife, Connie (Mercedes Ruehl), is on the warpath. Pfeiffer's extraordinary performance is the movie's major pleasure; she makes both Angela's toughness and her goodness believable, funny, and touching. As usual, Demme is great at providing incidental pleasures, including a terrific score (with original music by David Byrne) and a superbly eccentric cast that features Matthew Modine, Trey Wilson, Joan Cusack, Tracey Walter, and David Johansen (as a priest). The vibrant cinematography is by Tak Fujimoto.—T.R. (8/22/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Matador—One of the most original and entertaining of the new films from abroad. Directed by Pedro Almodóvar in 1986 (just before he made the 1987 "Law of Desire"), this comedy is all lush, clownish excess. Everything is eroticized—the colors, the violence. *The opening (horrible slasher images on a* VCR—crimes against women—that a retired, gored bullfighter masturbates to) stuns you for a few seconds before it makes you laugh. The characters in this movie act out their wildest fantasies—or, like the handsome, wealthy young virgin Ángel (Antonio Banderas), try to act them out—and embarrass themselves. Ángel is training to be a bullfighter, but he faints at the sight of blood. He's such a supreme fantasist that he hallucinates and sees what happened in a recent series of murders. Unluckily, he's fantasist enough to think that he committed them. It's all sumptuously sick and funny, with hair ornaments used as daggers, tall women in swirling cloaks, and love rites performed on the matador's hot-pink cape spread fanlike on the floor. This trashiness has its own poetry and bravura. Assumpta Serna plays a culmination of the scarlet-woman tradition of Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, and Anouk Aimée—all those flaming man-killers with their too vibrant smiles. And Almodóvar himself appears as a mad-genius couturier who messes up his curly hair before he appears in public. Also with Nacho Martínez as the matador, Eusebio Poncela as the police inspector, Carmen Maura as the psychiatrist, and Eva Cobo, Julieta Serrano, and Chus Lampreave. Written by the director and Jesús Ferrero; cinematography by Ángel Luis Fernández. In Spanish. (5/16/88) (Cinema Studio.)

Midnight Run—At first, Martin Brest's new film is content to be a pleasantly flaky buddy movie and to lean on the talents of its two stars, Robert De Niro and Charles Grodin. De Niro's Jack Walsh, an ex-cop who works for a weaselly L.A. bail bondsman (Joe Pan*toliano), goes to New York to retrieve a* white-collar crook named Jonathan Mardukas (Grodin), an accountant who upon learning that the corporation he worked for was an organized-crime front embezzled fifteen million dollars and gave almost all of it to charity. They travel across the country in a succession of vehicles, dodging federal agents, hit men, and a profoundly stupid rival bounty hunter (John Ashton). De Niro gets marvellous effects by seeming to be constantly suppressing anger and powerful physical energy. Grodin, a minimalist and a miniaturist, does all his acting with sneaky looks and minute variations in the tone of his flat, dull voice, and he creates a memorable comic character—a placid solid-citizen type who's much wilier and crazier than he appears to be. The two actors look as if they were genuinely enjoying each other. But as they get close to L.A. Brest starts pumping up his sweetly funny road movie with large-scale action scenes—it's as if he were afraid that a pair of superlative actors doing low-key character comedy wouldn't be enough entertainment for us. Also with Yaphet Kotto, Dennis Farina, Richard Foronjy, and Robert Miranda. Screenplay by George Gallo.—T.R. (8/8/88) (Art Greenwich Twin. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and National Twin; through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ Warner; starting Sept. 23.)

The Miracle (1948)—This Roberto Rossellini film is itself a miracle: brief (forty-three minutes), utterly simple in its means, and perhaps the most fully achieved—and most sensual—of all his movies. Anna Magnani stars as the peasant woman who is convinced that the child in her belly is a new Christ child, and Federico Fellini (who also wrote the story) plays the man who put the baby there. This is the film that was the subject of a censorship case that was fought all the way up to the Supreme Court. The screenplay is by Tullio Pinelli and Rossellini. In Italian. (Thalia SoHo; Sept. 28.)

Moon Over Parador—Paul Mazursky's new comedy is awkward, dopey, and very likable. Richard Dreyfuss plays Jack Noah, a New York actor who is roped into impersonating the puppet dictator of a small Latin-American country called Parador. (The real President has dropped dead suddenly, at a very inconvenient time for the Paradorian powers-that-be.) The central joke isn't that politics is theatre but that Jack treats this volatile situation as if it were simply an acting challenge, way off Broadway: he sees everything in actors' terms. This premise is too elaborate *for Mazursky, whose direction is clunkier* than usual. But we're carried past the movie's many infelicities by Mazursky's affection for actors; he seems to love their ridiculous qualities most of all. And Dreyfuss, who's in almost every scene, is wonderful. There probably isn't another actor who could make Jack Noah so transparently full of himself and yet so appealing. The movie is disappointing, frustratingly unfocussed, but somehow charming—it's a lot like most actors, come to think of it. With Sonia Braga, Raul Julia, Jonathan Winters, and Fernando Rey. Mazursky himself (uncredited) plays the dictator's horrible mother, and practically steals his own movie. The script, by the director and Leon Capetanos, is based loosely on a 1939 Paramount film called "The Magnificent Fraud."—T.R. (9/19/88) (Art Greenwich Twin, Carnegie Hall Cinema, and Metro Cinema. . . . ¶ Bay Cinema, and Beekman; through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin; starting Sept. 23.)

The Old Maid (1939)—Bette Davis doesn't have much talent for masochism. When she attempts the sacrificial-mother roles that were meat and potatoes to many a trouper, she builds the character so painstakingly that she loses her flair and turns mealy. In this costume picture, taken from Zoë Akins' Pulitzer Prize-winning play version of the Edith Wharton novel, she's an unwed mother who is forced to turn over her infant daughter to Miriam Hopkins, as her married cousin; then she must stand by and watch as her daughter grows up, treating her contemptuously as a spinster aunt. The picture isn't bad, but it trudges along and never becomes exciting. Edmund Goulding directed. With Jane Bryan, George Brent, and James Stephenson. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Sept. 22.)

Running on Empty—Naomi Foner's screenplay is about the problems of a fugitive family: Mom and Dad (Christine Lahti and Judd Hirsch) have been on the run since 1971, when, as student activists, they helped blow up a campus building, not knowing that there was a man inside. They keep moving all over the country with their two sons (River Phoenix and Jonas Abry), changing their names and taking menial jobs so that they won't draw attention to themselves. The crisis comes when their older son (Phoenix), a musical prodigy, is noticed by a sympathetic teacher and encouraged to audition for Juilliard. The director, Sidney Lumet, buries everything that's original about the story, and leaves his hardworking performers bogged down in the mess, spinning their wheels. There's not a moment that feels authentic, not a scene that isn't marred by some jarring detail or inept camera placement or the omission of basic information that would make the characters' emotions comprehensible. Instead of attending to detail, Lumet pumps the story full of gross, Oscar-worthy sentimentality. Worst of all, he uses the Phoenix character's musical talent to validate the seriousness of the boy's plight—as though his problems would be less deserving of our attention if he weren't a prodigy. The movie is a glum fiasco. Also with Martha Plimpton, whose fresh, lively readings and expressions as the older son's girlfriend give some spark to most of her scenes.—T.R. (9/19/88) (Coronet, 8th St. Playhouse, and Olympia. . . . ¶ National Twin; through Sept. 22.)

She Married Her Boss (1935)—The flat title tells the whole story of this uninspired office romance. Claudette Colbert, a chic, hyper-efficient secretary, is in love with her rich, miserable department-store-owner boss (Melvyn Douglas). When he finally marries Claudette, she discovers that he expects her to be Miss Efficiency forever. This is one of those movies in which all problems are finally solved by the hero and heroine getting drunk and throwing bricks through plate-glass windows. Gregory La Cava directed. (Biograph Cinema; Sept. 25-26.)

Singin' in the Rain (1952)—This exuberant satire of Hollywood in the late twenties, at the time of the transition from silents to talkies, is probably the most enjoyable of all American movie musicals. The teamwork of the stars, Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, and Debbie Reynolds, is joyful and the material is first-rate—ranging from parodies of the Busby Berkeley style of choreography to the Charleston and Black Bottom performed straight. The film falters during a too long love song on a deserted studio stage (later cut from some of the prints) and during a lavish oversize Broadway ballet, but these sequences don't seriously affect one's enjoyment. With Jean Hagen, Millard Mitchell, Cyd Charisse, and Rita Moreno. Directed by Kelly and Stanley Donen from the witty, affectionate script by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. The songs, by Nacio Herb Brown, with lyrics by Arthur Freed, include "Fit as a Fiddle," "You Were Meant for Me," "You Are My Lucky Star," and, of course, "Singin' in the Rain." (Cinema Village; Sept. 26-27.)

The Thin Blue Line—Errol Morris's trancelike, almost lyrical documentary tells the story of a 1976 cop-killing in Dallas and examines the process by which a man who is almost certainly innocent was convicted and sentenced to death for the crime. The movie's form is circular, spiralling, its obsessive, repetitive visual motifs echoed in Philip Glass's hauntingly monotonous score. In showing us the lies, the fears, the social pressures, the ulterior motives, the stubbornness, and the plain confusion that combined to produce the case against the unfortunate Randall Adams—whose fate is worthy of a Borges hero—Morris seems to be investigating not just this squalid murder but the very nature of untruth. His style is occasionally too fancy and elliptical for absolute clarity, but this is a powerful and thrillingly strange movie. Morris—who actually uncovered new evidence in the course of making the film—has turned Randall Adams' case into a kind of tabloid poetry, a meditation on uncertainty and the fascination of violence.—T.R. (9/5/88) (Lincoln Plaza.)

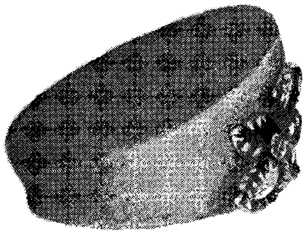
Tucker: The Man and His Dream—There are marvellous moments throughout Francis Ford Coppola's biography of Preston Tucker (Jeff Bridges), a Midwestern inventor/entrepreneur who tried, and failed, to manufacture and market an innovative new automobile in the late forties. The style of "Tucker" is hyped-up forties Hollywood, and we believe, at first, that its intent is ironic, that Coppola is playing with America's optimistic, movie- and magazine-fuelled vision of itself in the postwar years. Bafflingly, this style doesn't change, or even modulate, when Tucker's bold enterprise starts to come apart, undermined by pressure from the government and the big three auto companies; the movie remains grandiose and artificial—all golden lighting and low, heroic angles. "Tucker" collapses in nostalgia, bad faith, and Capra-style populism. Also with Joan Allen, Martin Landau, Frederic Forrest, Mako, Lloyd Bridges (uncredited), and Dean Stockwell, who does a lovely, mysterious cameo as Howard Hughes. Screenplay by Arnold Schulman and David Seidler; cinematography by Vittorio Storaro.—T.R. (8/22/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace. . . . ¶ Cinema II, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex; through Sept. 22.)

Who Framed Roger Rabbit—This manic comedy, in which animated cartoon characters interact with live actors, is an amazing feat of entertainment engineering—like a Disneyland ride or a World's Fair movie. The setting is Los Angeles in 1947, and the screenplay, by Jeffrey Price and Peter Seaman, takes off from the fairly witty conceit that the cartoon characters, called Toons here, are ordinary contract players in the already skewed universe of the Hollywood studio system. These strange creatures become involved in a conventional forties mystery plot, featuring a seedy, hard-drinking private eye (Bob Hoskins). The director, Robert Zemeckis, and his small army of animators and special-effects artists mean to pay homage to the Hollywood animation of the thirties and forties, but the movie doesn't have the right spirit. Technology and plot mechanics labor mightily to evoke an aura of freedom and uninhibited joy—yet there's hardly a spontaneous moment in the film. Also with Christopher Lloyd, Joanna Cassidy, and Stubby Kaye. The funniest Toon, Roger's sireny wife, Jessica, speaks with Kathleen Turner's (uncredited) voice and sings with Amy Irving's. The director of animation was Richard Williams. Adapted, very loosely, from the novel "Who Censored Roger Rabbit?," by Gary K. Wolf.—T.R. (7/11/88) (Embassy. . . . ¶ Gramercy, and Cinema 3; through Sept. 22.)

Wings of Desire ("Der Himmel über Berlin")—The director, Wim Wenders, who wrote the script with the collaboration of Peter Handke, has a theme: in an approximation of Rilke's words, "Joy has gone astray." We're told that "when the child was a child" stories held together. Now all we have is fragmentation, entropy. Two angels—Damiel (Bruno Ganz) and Cassiel (Otto Sander)—hover over the bleak, divided city and move among the forlorn Berliners, listening to what's in their minds: listening to the questions about existence that these people ask themselves. Our overhearing what the angels hear—the thoughts chanted on the track, all in even, quiet tones, as grayed out as the sunless skies—works on us like a tranquillizer. Eventually, Damiel falls in love with a beautiful French aerialist (Solveig Dommartin), and gives up his wings. With Peter Falk, who brings some funky warmth to the role of an American movie star, and Curt Bois as a sad-faced old man called Homer. The cinematography (tinted black-and-white, and color) is by Henri Alekan. This Franco-German production is in English, French, and German. (5/30/88) (Cinema Studio.)

A World Apart—Set in 1963, it's about a thirteen-year-old girl (Jodhi May) who lives a well-ordered, ruling-class life in a fine home in suburban Johannesburg until her father (Jeroen Krabbé), who's a Communist, flees the country in the middle of the night to escape arrest, and her mother (Barbara Hershey), the editor of a small anti-apartheid newspaper, is "detained" for ninety days, and then another ninety days. Based on a semi-autobiographical script by Shawn Slovo, the daughter of the journalist Ruth First and Joe Slovo, the leader of the banned South African Communist Party, the movie deals with the girl's feeling confused and resentful—the fight against apartheid is also her competitor. In prison or out, her mother is not all there for her. The theme of the movie is the conflict between fighting injustice and what we owe to our families—or, more poignantly, a young girl's pain at the loss of her mother and father, though she knows the reason for it. Shot in Zimbabwe, this remarkable first feature directed by the noted cinematographer Chris Menges has a visual snap to it. It's luminous yet very informal. And though, toward the end, it falls into chanting slogans, it has a radiant intelligence. The cast includes Linda Mvusi, who shared the best-actress award at Cannes with May and Hershey, and Tim Roth, Yvonne Bryceland, Albee Lesotho, David Suchet, and Nadine Chalmers. (6/13/88) (Quad Cinema; through Sept. 22.)

Les Chapeaux



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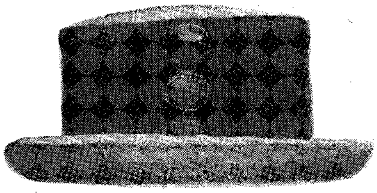

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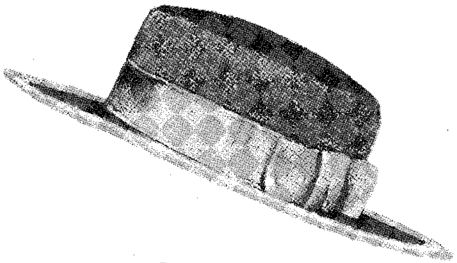

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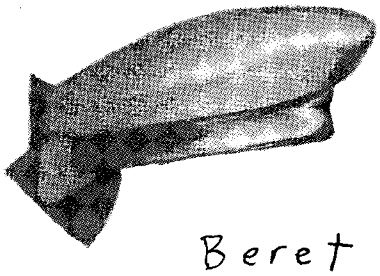

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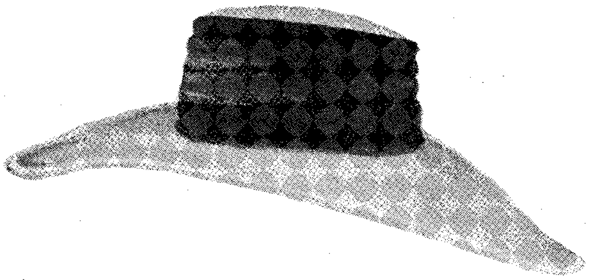
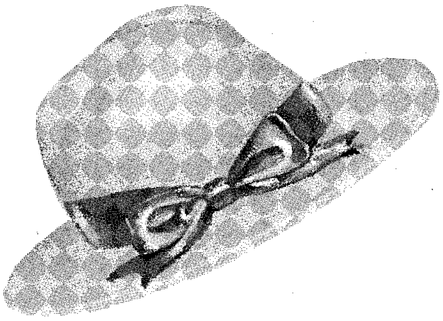
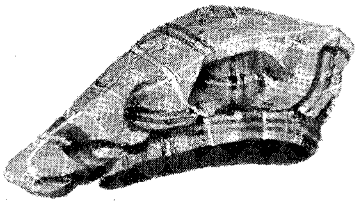


Picture

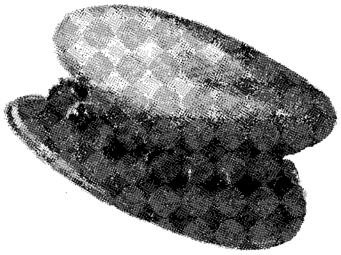
Adams



Fedora



Soft Beret



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THIS being election season, there is much clamorous talk on the campaign trail about America's greatness and how best to secure it. Michael Dukakis recalls how the country prospered under his Democratic forebears Roosevelt and Truman, and pledges that if he is elected he will return the United States to "economic greatness." George Bush goes further, rhetorically colonizing the future with his declaration that not only the twentieth but also the twenty-first will be, in Henry Luce's phrase, "the American century." Such bombast is hardly new to Presidential contests, but this year's sloganeering has a tired, windy quality, and it cannot be blamed solely on ultra-calculated packaging and passionless delivery. What the image-makers in both camps seem not to grasp is that greatness for a nation cannot be asserted—it must be sought and earned.

One measure of a nation's greatness is how it reacts when it makes a mistake. Does it face up to the error, seek to make amends, and take steps to prevent a recurrence, or does it deny wrongdoing and flee responsibility? On one occasion this summer, Congress and the Reagan Administration took the first path, publicly apologizing and making monetary retribution for the forced internment of tens of thousands of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. With that act, the United States became a stronger, healthier nation. An old wound was treated; the healing process began.

Unfortunately, the official response to a more recent misadventure—the U.S.S. Vincennes' downing of a civilian Iranian airliner on July 3rd, killing all two hundred and ninety people aboard—has been less high-minded. The United States did immediately acknowledge destroying the plane. And at a hastily called Pentagon press conference Admiral William Crowe, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, expressed deep regret at the loss of life and promised a full investigation. But Admiral Crowe, like other American officials in subsequent statements, steadfastly refused to accept any blame for the accident, and chose instead to justify the Vincennes' actions by citing information that was eventually revealed to be false. Likewise, when President Reagan proposed to make payments to the victims' families the White House took pains to describe these not as "reparations" or "damages" but as "compensation," in order not to imply any admission of responsibility. Even compensation, however, was too much for Congress. According to Representative Les Aspin, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, which held a hearing on the proposal, Congress is not inclined to approve such payments. Meanwhile, Vice-President Bush, appearing before the United Nations Security Council, argued that the accident was Iran's fault, because Iran had "allowed a civilian aircraft loaded with passengers to proceed on a path over a warship engaged in battle."

LAUNDRY
HAPPY CHONG
LAUNDRY

STUART LEEDS

What stands as the final official word on the affair came on August 19th, when the Pentagon released the report of the Navy's formal investigation team. The report conceded that Vincennes crewmen were mistaken in identifying Iran Air Flight 655 as an F-14 fighter aircraft, and that they erred again in judging the plane to be descending when it was in fact climbing. Nevertheless, Admiral Crowe wrote in a memo to Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci that the accident "was not the result of culpable conduct onboard Vincennes." Rather, Crowe wrote, "I believe that the actions of Iran were the proximate cause of this accident and would argue that Iran must bear the principal responsibility for the tragedy." The closest the Navy came to blaming one of its own was to single out an unnamed Vincennes crewman—an operations officer near the bottom of the chain of command—for a non-punitive, administrative censure, and Carlucci, on Admiral Crowe's recommendation, later rescinded that. Crowe made a special point of exonerating the ship's hundred-and-eighty-million-dollar Aegis radar system, declaring that "it performed as designed" and that "the sensor data collected was accurate."

Given the many parallels between this incident and the Soviet Union's shooting down of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, in 1983, such defensiveness on the part of American officials is not surprising. But it is discouraging, for two reasons. The last thing the Reagan Administration wants is for the United States to be seen as the moral equivalent of "the evil empire," yet it is precisely that impression which is reinforced by the American refusal to accept responsibility. And the more insistently American political and military leaders contend that the United States is blameless in this affair, the less likely it is that they will be able to absorb the vital lessons implicit in the Vincennes tragedy.

What most urgently demands attention is the questions this unhappy episode raises about the nation's nuclear-weapons strategy—especially the development of space weapons and the policy of "launch on warning." The keepers of the American nuclear arsenal are permanently in much the same predicament that confronted the captain and crew of the Vincennes. They are on constant alert against the possibility of attack, and as they search the skies for enemy forces they are completely dependent not on their own eyes but on a fantastically complex computerized radar system, which often provides them with unavoidably ambiguous information—information they have almost no time to ponder. The major difference, of course, is that a mistake by the stewards of the nuclear arsenal would put an end not merely to two hundred and ninety lives but, quite probably, to civilization as we know it.

Political insiders commonly describe the 1988 Presidential campaign as a battle for the future—over whether the Republicans or the Democrats are better qualified to lead the nation toward the next century. Yet the public is hearing little intelligent talk about the single greatest threat to the future, the nuclear-arms race. Perhaps in this age of the photo opportunity and the eight-second sound bite it is too much to expect candidates to draw connections between an event like the Vincennes tragedy and American nuclear-weapons policy. But why has neither candidate spelled out a strategy for halting the pell-mell, mutually reinforcing modernization of the Soviet and American nuclear arsenals—the replacement of older weapons with models that are even more accurate, even harder to detect, even quicker to reach their targets? Instead of confronting that issue, Mr. Bush accuses Mr. Dukakis of never meeting a weapons system that he liked, and Mr. Dukakis counters by joyriding in an M-1 tank for the television cameras and retreating from his earlier condemnations of space weaponry. None of this constitutes a prelude to greatness.

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Béisbol

A YOUNG woman we know writes:

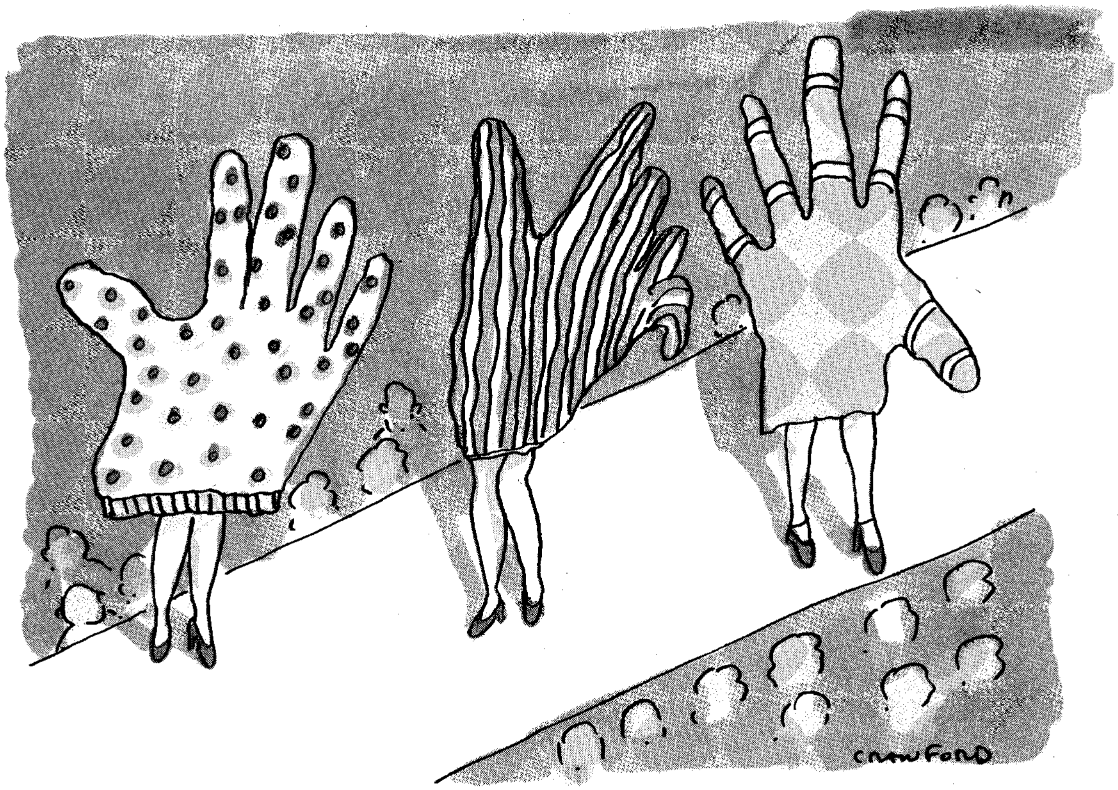
I spend about half of each year in a remote spot in the Dominican Republic, a peninsula where steep slopes planted thick with coconut palms drop to a bay on one side and to the open Atlantic on the other. My house is perched over a pebble beach and has a profusion of hammocks, a library of rereadable books, and a radio on which a welter of local stations mix baseball with merengue. The Dominican Republic is probably the most baseball-struck little country in the Hemisphere, and there are many true fans among my neighbors, scattered around the hillsides in clusters of palmwood houses. In the small stores that sell rum, cigarettes, rice, and beans, a fan-in-exile like me can, by the magic of word of mouth, keep up with the standings, a smattering of important scores, and which teams are forging ahead of the pack.

This year, I arrived in the country bearing a Mets scorecard, a Mets calendar, and a Mets tote bag for one fellow-*fanático*, a local farmer named Leoncio. Over the years since we discovered our common interest, Leoncio and I have come to depend on each other for conversation, comparison, and disputation—the lifeblood of fandom—and have become fast friends into the bargain. He is still young, he works hard, and he retains an appealing innocence—a wish to believe in causes, which moves him to proclaim his love of his country, his family, and his village's amateur team. (He once played first base for it.) Leoncio comes by nearly every day, and I gladly stop whatever I'm doing to join him in a serial sporting seminar.

The basic text, from which we freely depart, is the nightly game on Radio Santo Domingo, chosen seemingly at random from the National and American League schedules. The broadcasts are an essential part of my day, and I am careful to be bathed, fed, and installed in my hammock by game time, so that I can watch the sunset gradually darken the sea during the slow progress of the early innings. The proceedings are, of course, conducted in Spanish, which lends baseball a peculiarly rustic air: the infield is the "garden," and the infielders are "gardeners;" the outfield is the "forest," and the outfielders are "forest rangers." Home plate is the "hearth." A lazy fly ball is a *palomita*, a "little dove," and a home run is a "fence-flier." A good base runner can "swindle" second if he gets enough of a lead off first, and a good pitcher "anesthetizes" the opposing "ball men" by making them "fan the wind." Although I am by now accustomed to this graceful vocabulary, the commentary still has charm enough to lull me to sleep each night, often before the seventh *episodio*.

As the radio announcers faithfully run through the current form of the Dominican players in *las Grandes Ligas* before each broadcast, it's easy to get the impression that the hometown boys make up a kind of native team, fragmented and temporarily scattered over the United States each summer, and that the excellence of their performance is the proper preoccupation of the season. They are national treasures, and are fussed over accordingly. A Cardinals victory is only incidental to the number of r.b.i.s Pedro Guerrero contributed to it, and last year when the Mets won a hard-fought contest, with Backman and Hernandez both going three for five and Howard Johnson hitting a sacrifice fly with the bases loaded to break a tie, a local newspaper account bore the headline "SANTANA 0-3."

Leoncio keeps up with the records of



MILAN SAYS "GLOVES!"

all the Dominican players, and I frequently listen to his lectures on their talents: the range of the ghost, Tony Fernandez, at short; the underappreciated speed of Juan Samuel; Tony Pena's campaign against base-theft. To demonstrate his enthusiasm for George Bell, Leoncio steps up to an imaginary plate and uncorks a swing so tremendous that I can almost see the ball soaring over the coconut fronds and out beyond the fishing boats in the bay. Leoncio has an awed regard for George Bell that reminds me of the way I felt about Willie McCovey when I was growing up, in the orchard country of Northern California. His generous spirit and glorious line drives committed me to baseball in 1959, our rookie year—his as a player, mine as a fan.

Leoncio astonished me one day by confessing that he had never seen a live professional game anywhere. The nearest stadium, in Santiago de los Caballeros, is a half day's journey away, too far to go merely for pleasure. He puts aside just enough money to charge the car battery on which his television set runs, so that he can see the "Game of the Week" on Saturday afternoon, and every October he goes into town to watch the World Series on a color set in one of the bars—his annual splurge. The rest of the time, he has only the radio, but I can't see that his perceptions have been blunted or diminished. I used to think that there could be no substitute for the thrill of being at the park—for seeing in person the rise of the fastball and the dip of the curve—but, lying in the hammock one evening and listening to Leoncio's musings, I realized, with a start, that I had never actually attended a game in which Willie McCovey played. My memories of him were built from a few glimpses on television, voices on the radio, words in a newspaper, and the fervent wish that my own ambitions would someday flower as triumphantly and graciously as his, somewhere beyond the hills of my own small valley, which I was certain were the only things standing in my way.

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Restoration

THE Eldridge Street Synagogue, which was slowly decaying for decades and is now slowly being restored, stands on the last block of Eldridge Street before the Manhattan Bridge. The block's other landmarks are the Shanghai Barber Shop and the OK Refrigeration Service. The synagogue has four main doors side by side, and each is topped by a circular window, which gives it the look of a giant keyhole. Above the row of keyhole doors is a row of Moorish windows, and above *them* is a huge boarded-up rose window. You can't miss it.

One recent Sunday, we went to see the progress of the restoration, and found a handwritten notice on a basement door: "To whom about visiting our synagogue. Just drop a note to sexton Benjamin Markowitz." His address followed. "Each day you can meet me personal 11 AM to 4 PM. . . . A healthy summer and peace in Israel in the whole world." We didn't have to drop a note, for Mr. Markowitz himself, a tiny man in his late eighties, was beside us. He told us that he had been sexton for thirty years, and that he had been a ladies' tailor until 1969, when he retired. The congregation had fifty members, he said, adding, "But they don't all come. Some are elderly."

We then met Gerard R. Wolfe, who is a professor of continuing education at New York University, and also teaches a course on the "History and Architecture of New York City and Environs." He was shepherding a tour group of about forty, and, with the aid of a portable amplifier, was explaining the difference between old-law and new-law tenements. After drawing the group up before the synagogue, he said, "This is the largest synagogue built on the Lower East Side, and the first built by Eastern European Jews. It was started in 1886 and finished in 1887. The rose window has been removed for restoration. Notice the 'No Parking' sign in Chinese."

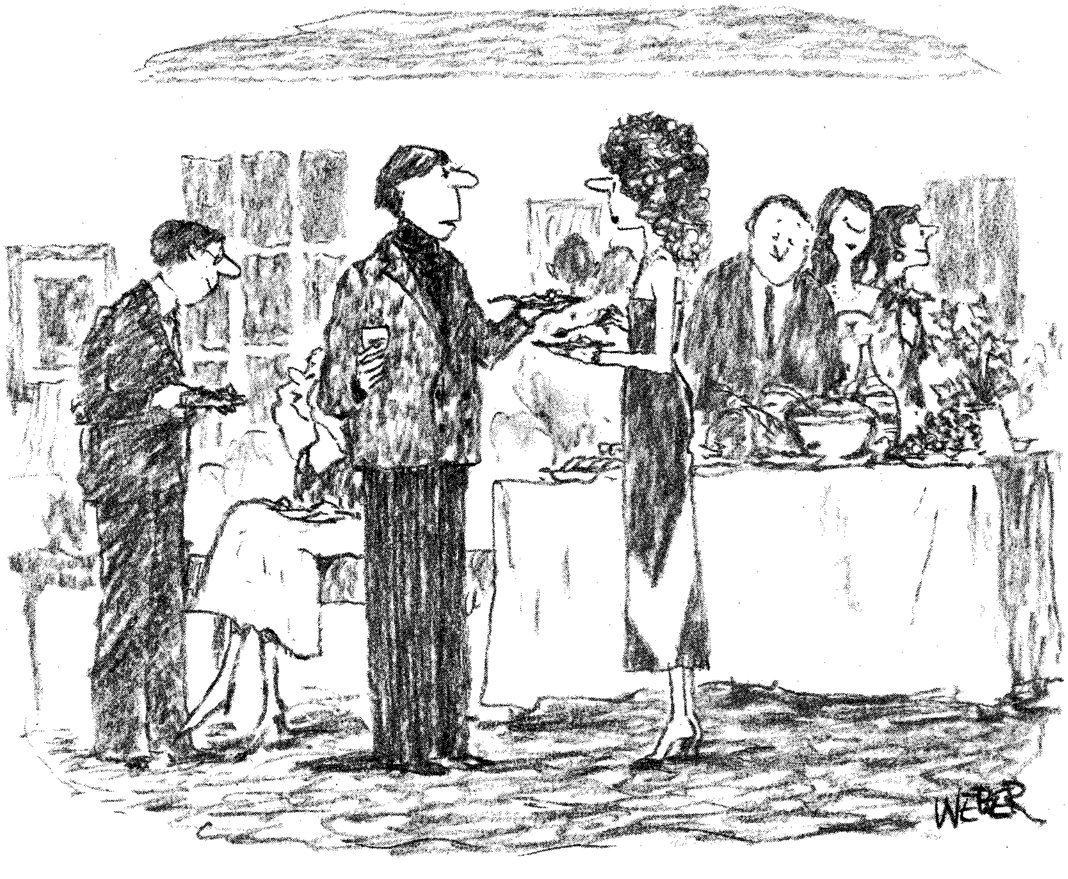
Mr. Markowitz let us all in through the basement door and into the *bais medrash*, the lower synagogue—a large room with a new, low-slung false ceiling and new brass light fixtures, a nineteenth-century ark, and, in the middle of the floor, a nineteenth-century *bimah*, or reader's platform.

Dr. Wolfe continued his talk from the *bimah*. He had discovered the Eldridge Street Synagogue in 1971, he said, and he went on, "When I first came, I couldn't get in. I came Friday night—nobody. I came the next morning—nobody. I asked neighborhood people, 'Is it abandoned?' 'No,' I was told. 'People still use it. Go see Mr. Markowitz.' I found him, and he let me into this room. It was a cold November day, and the place was a mess. I thought, What a shame. Then I asked to go upstairs to the sanctuary. Mr. Markowitz said that it had been sealed since the early nineteen-thirties. I pried open a door to an interior staircase. Its walls were sheet tin, rusted and peeling; some of the stair treads were missing. When I got to the vestibule on the main floor, I found the doors of the sanctuary warped shut. I pulled them open and stepped inside, and my hair stood on end. It was like the Twilight Zone. The room was covered with dust. There were prayer shawls strewn about, and ceramic spittoons on the floor. The prayer books dated from 1909 and had been printed in Vilnius. In the ark were thirty Torahs, in various stages of decomposition. I brought my class over, and started giving tours. I called my friend Giorgio Cavaglieri—he's the architect who restored Jefferson Market Library—and had him look at the place. He said, 'The balcony is about to collapse. When it does, it'll bring the walls down, and anyone inside will be killed. The roof leaks, and the façade might fall down, too. Other than that, you can save the building.' "

Over the years, Dr. Wolfe said, he and other friends of the synagogue took the task in hand. He hurried through this part of the talk, as if to play down his own role, and he finished by saying, "With two years and two million dollars more, it'll probably be finished." Then he led all of us back out to the sidewalk and in through the keyhole doors to the sanctuary. Inside were another ark and *bimah*, on a much grander scale. At each corner of the *bimah* stood an ornate bronze pillar surmounted by a cluster of green glass lampshades. When you looked at the shades carefully, you could see that the glass was etched with a floral pattern. The ceiling, Dr. Wolfe said, was fifty-five feet high, and columns thrusting through the balcony and up to the barrel vault made it seem even higher. A two-tiered chandelier—it weighed over a ton, Dr. Wolfe said—hanging at the center of the sanctuary had its own glass shades. The only light came through the windows, some broken and covered with clear plastic, most set with green, yellow, blue, red, or pink panes. We looked out a broken one, onto a parking lot.

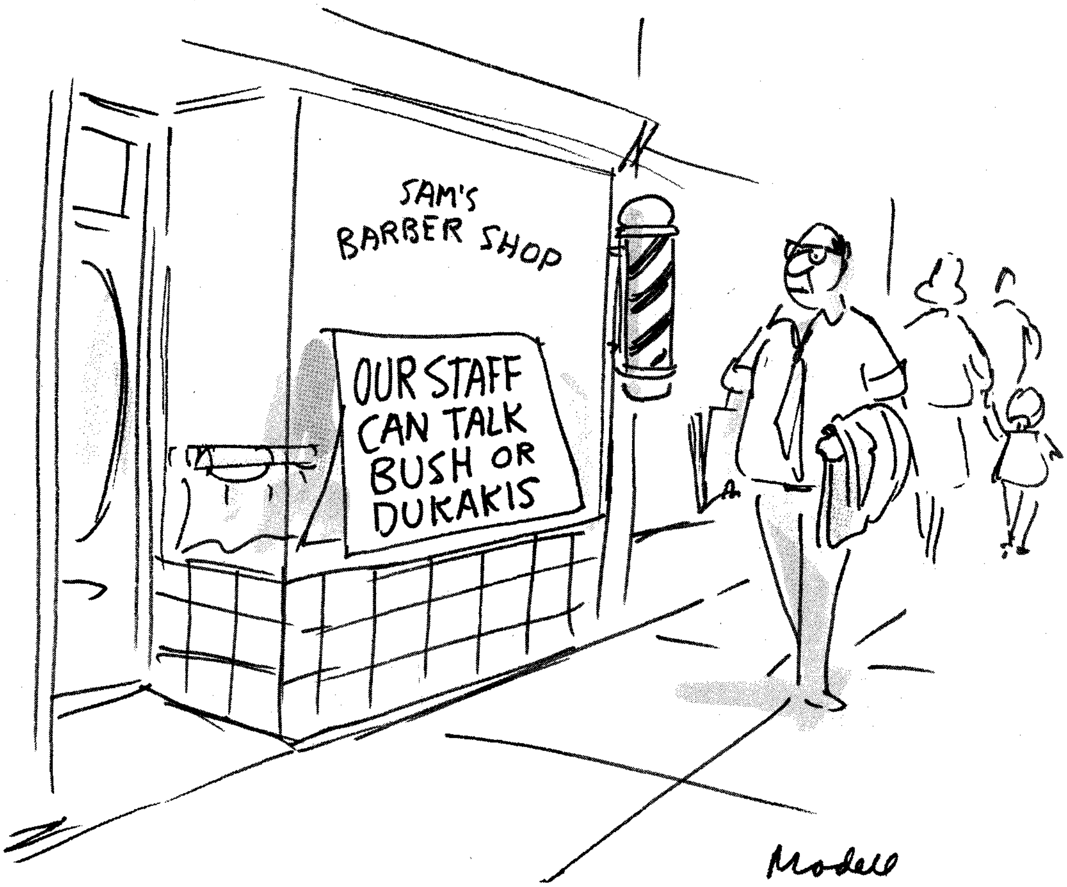
Dr. Wolfe went on to say that the ark was of Italian walnut; that on either side of it were painted trompe-l'oeil draperies ("The congregation must have run low on money," he remarked); that the pews, which had been built by a non-Jewish firm, were decorated with Gothic trefoils; that, anticipating the coming of electricity, the architects had installed unusually large gas mains, to facilitate wiring. The spittoons, he told us, had been removed for safekeeping. The debris was also gone. Sections of a new rose window lay in one aisle, waiting to be installed, and the ceiling of the balcony needed repainting, but the room was no longer in disrepair. Dr. Wolfe said, "You can just imagine what this place looked like, under the dust of— I almost said centuries."

An interesting slip, we thought, for though the synagogue was barely a century old it looked like something from ancient times. It may offer a partial answer to Europeans who complain that America has no history. There has been less history over here, but it has gone faster. To come, to build, and to go somewhere else



"I'm a writer, but not, thank heavens, the kind who has to write every day or he gets depressed."

—a hundred and one years is time enough for that.


SAM'S BARBER SHOP
OUR STAFF CAN TALK BUSH OR DUKAKIS
Modell

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Mechanic

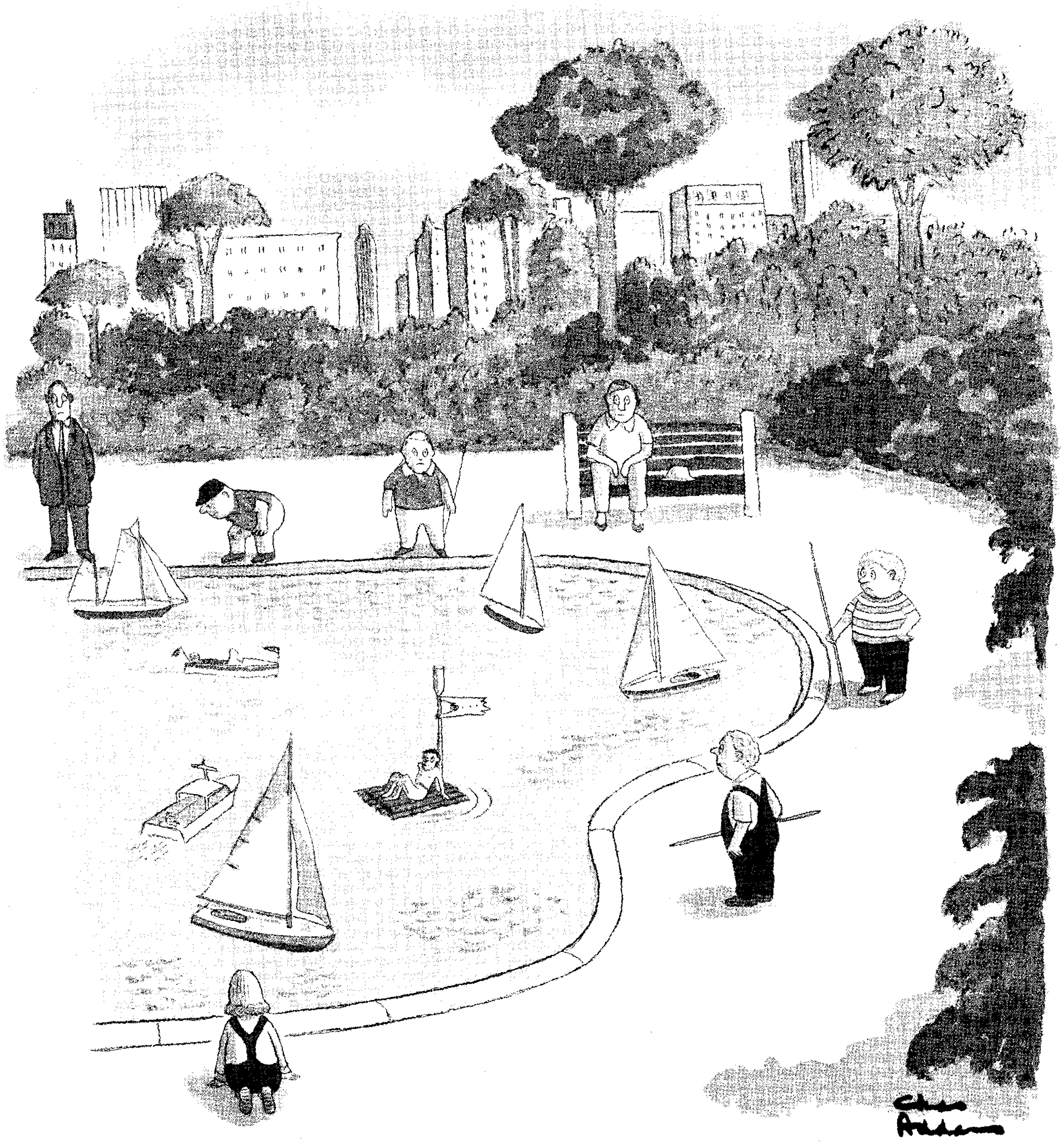
ALBERTO GONZALEZ, a billboard painter, says a lot of humble-sounding things, but if you ask him who his favorite artist is he won't hesitate to admit that it's Alberto Gonzalez. Mr. Gonzalez is a short man with smooth, tan, paint-splattered skin and the hawklike good looks of a Latin film star, and the other day we joined him on some electric-powered scaffolding as he was lettering the text of a sign for Goldstar television sets on a giant billboard up above Nathan's in Times Square. Mr. Gonzalez has been in this line of work for fifteen years, and he doesn't know exactly how many signs he's painted, and neither do the people at Artkraft Strauss, the company he works for, but he figures it's well over five hundred—most of them a lot more elaborate than the one he was working on that day. If Mr. Gonzalez were to put together a collection of his greatest hits, it would probably feature a forty-foot painting he did of Liza Minnelli's face and paintings of David Bowie, Barry Manilow, King Kong, Zero Mostel, and the Bee Gees; it would probably also include signs he did for "Cats," "The Phantom of the Opera," and "Les Misérables," and it would certainly include an ad he did for the movie "Cleopatra" featuring Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, and Rex Harrison. Unfortunately, Mr. Gonzalez has never bothered to take pictures of any of the billboards, and he has simply forgotten a lot of his work.

"You can't love a job," Mr. Gonzalez said. "It's something that's only going to be up for a couple of weeks, or a couple of months, and then they're going to erase it and put in some new copy. That's the way it is. If they keep the copy too long, it's no good for us."

In the billboard trade, Mr. Gonzalez said, someone like him is never called an artist; he's a mechanic. An artist is somebody who doesn't have to work on cold, windy days if he doesn't want to, or if it's sweltering hot, or at frightening heights. "When they call you up at the shop, they say, 'Alberto, we got a job for you, someplace on Broadway,' " Mr. Gonzalez explained. "And they just give you the measurements and a rough sketch, and then you go over there and fight. First, you find a way to get on the roof, and then you got to get the scaffolding up there, and rig it, and then you measure the wall, because, no matter what, one hundred per cent of the time the measurements they give you are wrong. You have to know how to fix things, you have to know about scale—things like that. That's why they call you a mechanic. But you have to have something inside. Like a singer, you have to have a voice to sing with."

The text of the sign for Goldstar televisions went "We confess a weakness for Gold." The Goldstar name, logo, and motto would be painted in below that, and opposite the copy Mr. Gonzalez had to reproduce an illustration—the kind you see on Wheaties boxes—of three Olympic-medal winners: a hale young American (the gold-medallist) holding up the arms of the two runners-up. "This is no problem," Mr. Gonzalez said. A more difficult job, such as a Michelob ad he completed a few months earlier, of a glass of beer being poured, entailed blending a lot of colors, and ended up looking exactly like a huge photograph—on a wall twenty-seven stories high and a hundred feet across. Ordinarily, Mr. Gonzalez begins painting without laying out the whole design, but for the Goldstar job he was instructed to finish sketching in all the lettering first, to make sure that the message would be done before the Olympics began. Mr. Gonzalez is fast and flawless. "You have to know what you are doing," he said. "You have to have a sense, because you just can't come down all the time and take a look."

Mr. Gonzalez raised the scaffolding and started in on "We confess." He had already marked out some guidelines with a chalk-covered snapline, and had made a light sketch in charcoal to get the spacing right, and now, with an indelible colored pencil, he fashioned the letters, following the typeface that appeared on the plan he was working from. He used a broken yardstick for a



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straightedge and a plumb line as a rudimentary compass, but mostly he worked by eye. After he and a partner painted the background in, Mr. Gonzalez began painting the letters. His hand, holding a wide brush, moved smoothly and steadily, in long, uninterrupted strokes.

If he really wanted to, Mr. Gonzalez could lay out and finish painting a line like "We confess," which was about six feet tall and forty feet long, in an hour, but he was taking it easy that day. The morning was cool, the sky was blue and cloudless, and the wind was quiet; fall wasn't exactly around the corner, but perhaps it was somewhere on upper Broadway or in the Bronx. Mr. Gonzalez leaned on the rail of the scaffolding and watched people go by. In his mind, he said, he could take a walk up and down Broadway and visit jobs he'd done over the years. In reality, however, many of the firms that he could once count on—Panasonic, for example—had put up permanent neon signs, or neon spectaculars, as they're called. "When they redesign Times Square, there will probably be more neon," he said. "We used to work all year—back and forth, up and down Broadway—but pretty soon we lose this building, we lose that building, and we lose a lot of work."

YOU MISSED IT

YOU should have been there—it was great. How come you missed it? I'd get up earlier if I were you. I can't believe you missed it. Maybe you have a discipline problem.

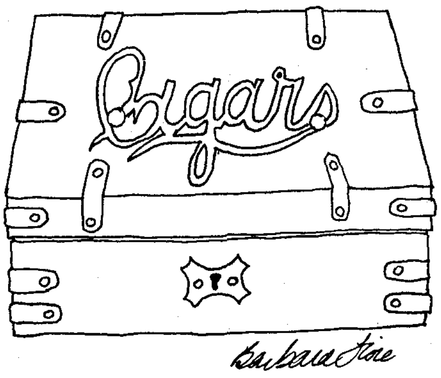
You got here slightly too late. A moment ago we had crab cakes. Marie cooked them up. Did you see the sunset when you came in? No? I can't believe you didn't see it. The sky was huge and dark; curved; with wisps of light, just the way you like it. After the sun finally went down, Marie and I sat on the porch and watched an electric, vital blue just over the western horizon. You hardly ever get to see a blue like that. Marie, me, Billy—did I tell you he was there?—watched it together. Billy took me by the legs and tumbled me over and over until I burst out laughing; then he took Marie and placed her on top of me, and I laughed and laughed until I thought I would burst; and then—get this—Billy piled on top and rolled over the two of us like a steamroller. We couldn't stop laughing.

Are you comfortable? Can I get you something? Sure? Can I ask you a question? How come you weren't there? Were you taking some kind of examination or something? So anyway, we got up. I don't know if you've seen the way Marie looks in the new dress I bought her. It hangs on her so nicely. She stood up, and I watched the dress hang. I don't know if we missed you or not. Later on we thought, "He missed *us*," but that is different. Then the little boys and girls of the neighborhood came by. We wanted to remember to tell you about that. The oldest, the cute one who is called Shiloh, brought a lizard to Marie. That's what made her think to cook up the crab cakes. When she brought out the steaming mess of crab cakes, she put her hands on her hips and let the steam make her perspire—little drops running down her neck and even onto her breasts. "I wouldn't care to know anyone who isn't here with us," she said defiantly. You should have been there. But I've said that.

In my opinion, you're the kind of guy who missed Hell Week, railroads sending clouds of steam into the station, singing just to hear the sound of your own voice, and operetta. How could you have done it? With all your potential? How could you have been so stupid and lazy? You weren't here when we had the intelligent debate about Vietnam. You skipped; you missed *the moment*, and don't pretend you didn't.

But I'm ahead of myself. Where was I? Well, after having such a wonderful time on the porch, we walked down Water Street. The lights were just beginning to come on. Suddenly we heard "The Gal from Joe's"—the Ellington tune. It *was* Joe's. An acre of pleasure spread out before our hungry eyes—room after room! Range-fed chicken, fish you can't get anymore, delicious beers, and turkeys from Tidewater farms like "Acrewood," "King's Forty," "Underlea," "Scrivesden," and "Rose Hall"—the last miraculously raised from its ashes. The best part was that jazz was being reborn in the back room. Maybe you heard about that—how suddenly a little white boy added a note to "A Night in Tunisia" at Joe's in such a way that the audience was reduced to utter respectful silence, at which point black and white men and women, each one an expert in the development of bebop and other modern jazz idioms, clasped hands while tears streamed down their faces. You had to see it. Why *didn't* you see it? Were you in *detention* or what?

Then Billy brought the novel out of its doldrums of postmodern irrelevancy. Somehow, with that wonderful natural spontaneity of his, he was able to capture what I was saying and cast it in novelistic terms. I was so enthralled with the rebirth of jazz that I must have communicated to him some quintessential American energy, which, together with his work in linguistics and his deep sympathy for Hispanics and women, came together to produce an American free-form prose that promises to enrich all our work. Whew. It took my breath away to hear it.



Then we walked out along the causeway. The little fisherfolk who go out in their boats just as they have for centuries raised a cheer: "Hurrah for the creators of a new American civilization!" they cried. The head man or person of the fisherfolk came out and explained that it is the custom—indeed, the stated purpose and goal—of the fisherfolk to be willing to die for the right to save the best fish for their sweethearts. Then in a very tender way they explained that *we* were their sweethearts, and they gave us all the fish. I erected an impromptu brazier, and Marie grilled them up. I gave Marie a little kiss, and Marie gave Billy a big hearty sloppy one, and we all three settled down to eat this corn tortilla of incomparable delicacy, which Marie had in her pocket.

Then we told stories about you. How you didn't get a National Merit Scholarship. (Remember how *easy* they were to get?) And how you missed seeing the Tall Ships. I mean, everybody saw the Tall Ships. I know people who were sick beyond endurance with seeing the Tall Ships by *accident*—just running into the sight of them out a window or something—and apparently you never saw them once. And how about all those things you said you saw when we weren't with you, like the Liberation of Paris, and the '51 National League pennant race, and Elvis when he was under contract to Sam Phillips at Sun in Memphis?

Marie said she likes you anyway. She told a long story about taking a bicycle trip with you in France and stopping in an out-of-the-way restaurant that looked just perfect and all they had was toast. "How do you make it?" you asked. The man said nothing. "How much *is* it?" you asked. By the way, the man turned out to be a great artist, and the sketches Marie bought that day are worth a small fortune now. I wonder why you had to ask that. You made the man so sad. Marie liked him right away and made friends, or so she says.

Could I borrow about one hundred dollars? Your parts are on order. We had some corned beef, but that guy over there got the last serving.

—George W. S. Trow

THE HALLOWEEN PARTY

WHENEVER Nathan Shapiro regarded Eleanor Parnell, it was like looking at a transparent overlay in the World Book Encyclopedia. In his mind he would flip back and forth from today's deep-voiced, black-haired, chain-smoking, heavy-breasted woman in a red sheath dress or tight dungarees, gracefully working the cork from another bottle of pink California wine, to the vague, large, friendly woman in plaids who had fed him year after year on Cokes and devilled-ham sandwiches, whose leaves he had raked for seven autumns now, and who still lay somewhere underneath the new Eleanor, like the skeleton of a frog beneath the bright chaos of its circulatory system.

It was only since Nathan had turned fourteen and found himself privy to the reckless conversation of divorcées—of those half-dozen funny, sad women with whom his mother had surrounded herself—that he had discovered Eleanor Parnell to be a woman of bad habits and of enterprises that ended in disaster. They said that she baked and consumed marijuana desserts, and that she liked to spend Christmas Eve playing blackjack in Las Vegas, alone. She drove her scarlet Alfa Romeo with the abandon of someone who, as Mrs. Shapiro pointed out, had always been very unlucky.

When she was hardly older than Nathan was now, Eleanor had spent two triumphant years on the L.P.G.A. tour; then she'd fallen from a horse and broken her left elbow. Nathan had seen her trophies, once, in a glass cabinet up in Eleanor and Major Ray's bedroom. Her real-estate company went down under a hailstorm of lawsuits and threats of criminal prosecution which Nathan and his mother had read about in the Huxley *New Idea* and even, eventually, in the Washington *Post*. Cayenne, her New Orleans-style restaurant in Huxley Mall, closed after only a few months. And there had been a pale little baby, a redhead named Sullivan, who lived so briefly that Ricky, Nathan's little brother, did not even remember him.

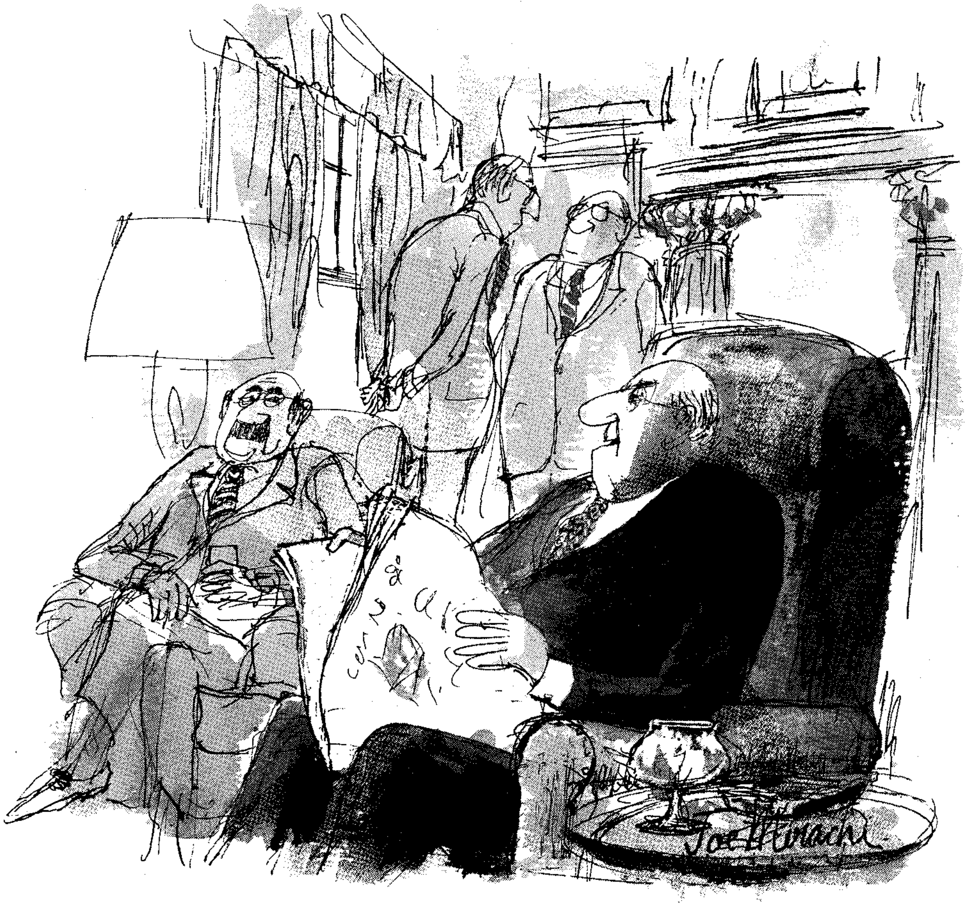
All these tales of misfortune, all the melancholy under Eleanor's eyes and around her mouth, had the surprising—to Nathan—effect of causing him to fall helplessly in love. It began one August when, after a hiatus of several years, he resumed his ancient habit of visiting the Parnells' house every day, for soft drinks and conversation with Eleanor. He was driven to her, at first, simply by loneliness and by the sadness of boredom. Ricky was gone—he had gone to live in Boston with their father the previous spring—and during the tedious, spectacular afternoons of August the house was distressingly empty. All month, Mrs. Shapiro, who was a nurse, had to work late on the ward, so Nathan ate dinner with his friend Edward St. John and Edward's bohemian family more often than usual, and he was glad to spend the last afternoons of the summer down the street at the Parnells'. Major Ray—Major Raymond Parnell, of Galveston, Texas—did not get home from the base until seven o'clock, and Nathan would sit in the kitchen until Major Ray's boisterous arrival, watching Eleanor smoke cigarettes and squeeze lemons into her diet Coke, of which she drank sixty ounces a day—enough, as Major Ray often declared, to reanimate a dead body. She would ask Nathan for his opinions on hair styles, decorating, ecology, religion, and music, and he would offer them only after a good deal of consideration, in an airy, humorous, pedantic tone of voice, which he borrowed, without knowing it, from his father. Eleanor had treated him without condescension when he was a little boy, and she now listened to him with an intentness that was both respectful and amused, as though she half expected him to tell her something new.

Nathan's love for Eleanor followed hard on the heels of his long-awaited and disastrous growth spurt, and it wrenched him every bit as much, until his chest ached from the sudden and irregular expansion of his feelings. In the mirror the sight of his heavy-rimmed eyeglasses and unfortunate complexion, of the new, irregular largeness of his body, of his suddenly big—his fat—stomach, would send him off on giddy binges of anxiety. He ate sweet snacks and

"Now what?"

slept badly and jumped at loud sounds. The sight of Eleanor's red Alfa Romeo—the sight of any red car—disturbed him. He was filled with deep compassion for animals and children, in particular for Nickel Boy, the Parnells' dog, a sensitive, courtly old beagle. In fact, Nathan spoke at length to Nickel Boy about his feelings for Eleanor, even though he knew that talking to a dog was not really talking but, as he had read in *Psychology Today*, simply making a lot of comforting sounds in order to secrete some enzyme that would lower his own blood pressure and slow his pulse.

Every night before he switched off the lamp, and every morning when he awoke, he took out the collection of photographs of Eleanor Parnell he had pilfered from his mother's album and looked deeply into each of them, trying to speak to Eleanor with the telepathy of love. In his freshman-English class they arrived at the writing of poetry, and Nathan, startled into action, composed haiku, limericks, odes, and cinquains to Eleanor, as well as an acrostic sonnet, the first letters of whose lines daringly spelled out E-L-E-A-N-O-R P-A-R-N-E-L-L; whenever, in these poems, he referred to her directly, he called her Jennifer—like "Eleanor" a dactyl.



"The poor are getting poorer, but with the rich getting richer it all averages out in the long run."

On the Saturday before the start of his freshman year of high school, as Nathan wandered home through the woods from Edward's house, trying to walk erect, he saw Eleanor under the tulip poplars, in a battered pith helmet, wildly shooting down wasps' nests with the pistol nozzle of a garden hose. Great golden, malevolent wasps had been something of a problem all summer, but after all the rain in July they proliferated and flew into the houses at suppertime.

"Is it working?" called Nathan, trotting toward her. One of the things he loved about Eleanor was her inventiveness, however doomed.

"Oh, no," Eleanor said. As soon as she glimpsed Nathan she began to laugh, and the stream of water shivered and fell to the ground. Her laugh, which was the first thing Nathan remembered noticing about Eleanor, had always been odd—raucous and dark, like a cartoon magpie's or spider's—but lately it had come for Nathan to be invested with the darkness of sex and the raucousness of having survived misfortune. She had been in the sun too long, and her face was bright red. "No one was supposed to see me doing this. Do you think this is a bad idea? They look pretty pissed off. Major Ray thought this wasn't a good idea." Major Ray did not appreciate Eleanor.

"I disagree," said Nathan, gazing up at the treetops, where the wasps had hung their cities of paper. A dense golden cloud of wasps wavered around them. "There's a lot less of them now."

"Do you think so?" said Eleanor. She took off her hat and stared upward. Her bangs clung to her damp, sunburned forehead.

"Yes," said Nathan. "I guess you drowned them. Or maybe the impact kills them. Of the water." The cloud of wasps widened and descended. "Uh, Eleanor. Could I— Maybe I should try it."

"All right," said Eleanor. She handed him the squirting, hissing nozzle and then, solemnly, the pith helmet, all the while keeping an eye on the insects and biting her lip. Almost immediately Nathan got the feeling that a blanket, or a net, was about to fall on him. Eleanor jumped backward with a cry, and Nathan was left to fight off the wasps with his lunatic weapon, which he did for fifteen valiant seconds. Then he ran, with Eleanor behind him. He tore around the front of the Parnells' house, crossed the front lawn, and ran out onto Les Adieux Circle. At the center of the cul-de-sac lay a round patch of grass, planted with a single, frail oak tree. No one on the street knew who was supposed to mow this island and so it generally went unmown, and, according to the local children's legend, it harbored a family of field rats. He and Eleanor fell into the weeds, and Nathan's eyeglasses, which were photosensitive and had darkened in the afternoon sunshine, flew from his face. Dazzled, frightened, he rolled laughing in her rosy arms, and they embraced like a couple of fortunate castaways. Then, his heart pounding, he scrambled to his knees and sought the comforting weight, the protection of his glasses.

Of the four stings that Nathan

received, three were on his thigh and one was on his shoulder. Eleanor took him into the house, up the stairs, and into the bedroom, where blue laundry lay folded on the big bed and where the golf trophies, like so many miniature Mormon temples, sat shining dimly in their cabinet. Then she led him into the bathroom, lowered the lid onto the toilet, and sat him down.

"Roll up your cutoffs, Nathan," she said. She found a box of baking soda and mixed a little with some tap water in the plastic bathroom cup. Nathan pulled upward on the frazzled leg of his shorts and tried to keep from crying. She knelt beside him to daub his pale, fat, blistered thigh. Nathan flinched, but the paste was cool, and he was overcome with gratitude. He didn't know what to do, and so he stared at the parting of her hair, at Eleanor's miraculous scalp, white and fine as polished wood.

"I guess Major Ray was right," said Eleanor. "It wasn't such a hot idea." She cackled nervously, and it was a relief to Nathan to see that she also felt that something weird was happening—such a relief that be began to cry, although he hated crying more than anything else in the world.

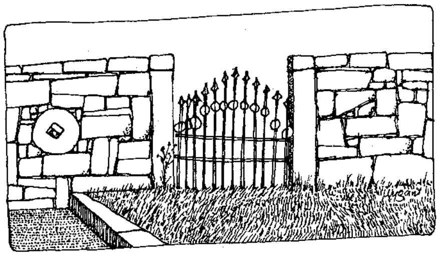
"Oh, Jesus, does it hurt, honey?" Eleanor said. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Does it hurt?"

This expression of concern made Nathan inordinately happy, and he tried to tell her it didn't hurt a bit, but he was too miserable to speak. He was frightened by the zeal of his crying, but it felt too good to stop. So he covered his face and hee-hawed like a child.

Eleanor stopped ministering to his wasp stings and sat back on her heels, regarding Nathan. A different kind of concern entered her face, and all at once she looked very sad. "What's the matter, Nathan?" she said.

BUT Nathan told no one, not even Edward, to whom he generally confided all his ludicrous amours. The two boys had supported and amused one another through a long series of fanciful loves, but until now the objects of their affections had always been unattainable, unlikely, and laughable: a prom queen, a postwoman, the earth-sciences teacher Miss Patocki, or the disturbing Sabina McFay, Edward's nineteen-year-old neighbor, who was half Vietnamese and rode a motorcycle. Not so Eleanor Parnell; she was unattainable and farfetched, but she was not at all laughable, and Nathan said nothing to Edward about her.

When he learned, from his mother, that he had been invited to the Parnells' Halloween party, he was flattered and struck with fear, and during the abject, optimistic weeks that followed he resolved to declare his feelings to Eleanor Parnell once and for all at this party. For ten days his head was filled with whispered, intricate repartee.



At dusk on Halloween, just as the youngest and most carefully chaperoned of the demons and nurses and mice were beginning to make their rounds, Nathan and Edward were standing in the living room of the Shapiros' house, drawing pictures with colored pencils onto Mrs. Shapiro's arms, back, and shoulders. Nathan's mother sat on a horsehide ottoman, in blue fishnet tights, blue high-heeled shoes, and a strapless Popsicle-blue bathing suit, laughing and complaining that the boys were pressing too hard as they drew anchors, hearts, thunderbolts, and snakes across her skin. The boys dipped the tips of the pencils into a jar of water, which made the colors run rich. As the drawings began to predominate over unmarked

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LONG LIKE A RIVER

I wonder what happened to my poor dog's soul.
I see her swimming through a muddy river—
silvered, dense, fluorescent—her neck and shoulders
serious with intention. But what river?
St. Johns River running thickly by my parents'
fallen mansion, from the fallen days of our childhood
in billowing Florida? (Garfish washed up
on the sandbagged lip of shore, where lolling
manatees once combed their hair, and Father shot
cartridges at an alligator, dense and buoyant
as a log, that logged its voyage past
our house on St. Johns bay, on its way
through suburbs to some ancient ooze.) The Mississippi? Long as its Indian name, it poured through
St. Louis, where my grandmother grew, an Irish girl
green as its banks and the tea she brewed
for her father and mother, who buried their hands
in her waist-length red hair. Long like the river
that runs to New Orleans, and further south
to the south of Buras, Louisiana,
its luxuries of oranges, its natural gases
and convocations of fanciful insects? Here's where
a father learned how to gamble, and shoot small game,
and mow a long-haired field and harvest crawfish—
the length of any river like the length of a life
remembered when the mind refuses to go forward.
What are the words for the rivers we love?
The Clark Fork, snow-fed, its full house
of trout the dream of a summer noon? Plentiful,
ice-cold, the color of rusted tin? Is this
where a dog can swim to some animal heaven,
this river—swim beyond the shame of allegiance
to an alien tribe, a capricious master,
in the arms of some heavenly river?

—NANCY SCHOENBERGER

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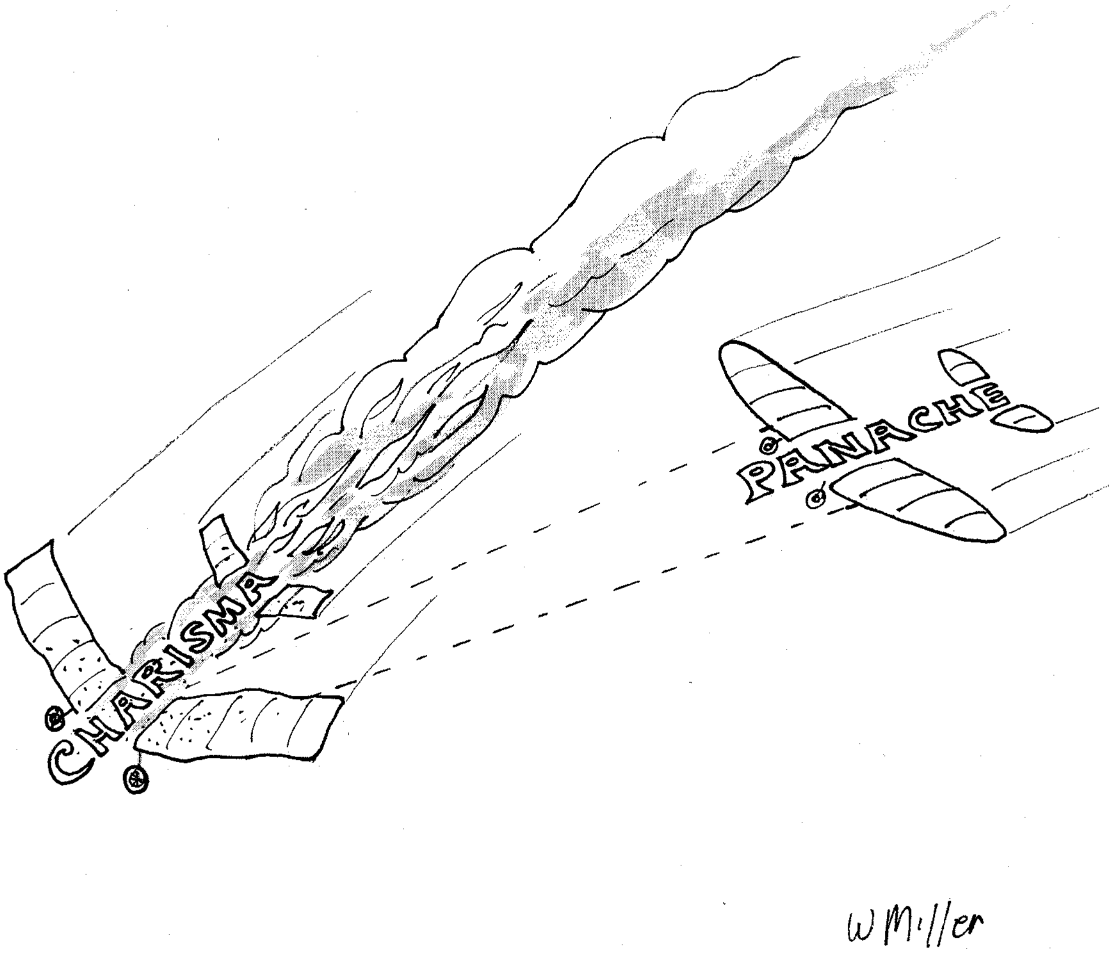


patches of skin, Nathan put his crimson pencil down and stepped back, as if to admire their handiwork.

"I think that's enough tattoos, Mom," he said.

"Is that so?" said his mother.

"Personally," said Edward, inspecting her, "I think a big, you know, triumphant eagle, with a javelin in its claw, right here under your neck, would look really cool, Mrs. Shapiro. Rose."

"That sounds fine, Edward," said Mrs. Shapiro.

Nathan looked at his friend, who began to paint a gray, screaming eagle. Nothing about his voice or studious little face indicated that he felt anything but the enthusiasm of art. As a matter of fact, his drawings were much better than Nathan's—bold, well drafted, easily recognizable; the snakes Nathan had drawn looked kind of like sewing needles, or flattened teaspoons.

"If you think about it," said Edward, in the careful but dazed way he had of propounding his many insights, "the symbol of our country is a really warlike symbol."

"Hmm," said Mrs. Shapiro. "Isn't that interesting?"

When her costume was finally complete, and Nathan regarded her in all her fiery, gay motley, his heart sank, and he was seized with doubts about the costume he'd decided on. After much indecision and agonized debate with Edward, whose father was an avant-garde artist, Nathan had decided upon a *conceptual* Halloween costume. He had made a coat hanger into a wire ring that sat like a diadem on his brow, bent the end of it so that it would stand up over the back of his head, then made a small loop into which he could screw a light bulb. When he wore this contraption the light bulb seemed to hang suspended a few inches above him, and the wire was, in a dim room, practically invisible. He was going to the Parnells' Halloween party, in Edward's excited formulation, as a guy in the process of having a good idea for a costume.

The whole notion now struck Nathan as childish, and anemic, and it bothered him that the light bulb would never actually be lit up, and would just bob there, gray and dull, atop his head, as though he were really going to Eleanor's party as a guy in the process of having a *bad* idea for a costume. The truth was that Nathan felt so keenly how plain, how squat and clumsy he had become—his belly had begun to strain against the ribbed elastic of his new gym shorts, and his mother had received his last school pictures with a fond, motherly, devastating sigh—that he regretted having passed up the opportunity of concealing himself, if only for one night, in the raiment of a robot or a king.

"Cool," said Edward, standing up straight and blowing gently on the eagle tattoo.

Mrs. Shapiro rose from the ottoman, went to the chrome mirror that had been one of his parents' last joint purchases, and seemed greatly pleased by the apparition that she saw there. She hadn't wanted them to illustrate her face, and now it rose pale and almost shockingly bare from her shoulders. "You did a great job," she said. "I like the hula girl, Edward," she added, looking down at her right biceps.

"Make a muscle," he said. He went to the mirror and took hold of her right arm and wrist. Nathan followed.

"Flex your arm," said Edward.

Mrs. Shapiro flexed her arm. Nathan leaned over his friend's shoulder to watch the hula girl do a rudimentary bump and grind. He looked around for something to stand on, to get a better view, and his glance fell upon the matching chrome wastebasket, which stood beside the mirror, but when he balanced himself on its edge and peered down at the dancing tattoo the wastebasket immediately gave way. Nathan's eyeglasses, which for weeks he'd been meaning to tighten, slipped from his face, and when he fell he landed on them with a gruesome crunch.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Shapiro. "Not again."

"I'm sorry, Mom," said Nathan.

"Are you all right? Did you hurt yourself?"

Edward, laughing, held out his hand to Nathan to pull him to his feet.

"You're insane, Dr. Lester," he said.

"You're deranged, Mme. LaFarge," said Nathan, automatically. He looked at his friend and his tattooed mother gazing down upon him with a kind of mild, perfunctory concern. They turned to one another and laughed. A barrage of miniature-demon knocks rang out against the front door of the house. Nathan passed a hand before his eyes, blinked, and shook his head.

"I can see," he said flatly.

After Edward went home, he and his mother sat down at the kitchen table that smelled of 409 and called Ricky in Boston, to see how his trick-or-treating had gone and to tell him that Nathan could see without his glasses. This was a development that ophthalmologists had been calling for since Nathan was five and had donned his first little owlish pair of horn-rims. Though its coming to pass was certainly something of a shock, it did not surprise him, especially now, when the behavior of his body was so continually shocking, and when so many of the ancient fixtures of his life—his slight form, his smooth face, his father and brother—were vanishing one by one.

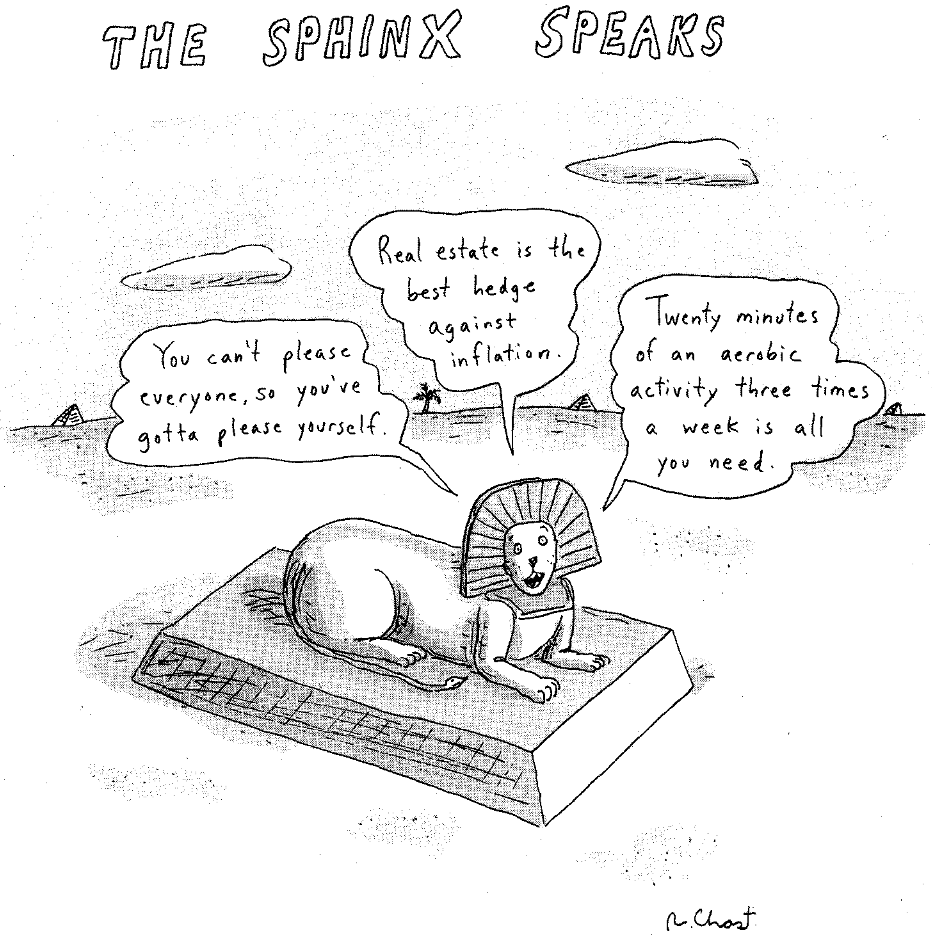
Anne, his stepmother, answered the phone but went immediately to find Ricky, as she always did, and it occurred to Nathan for the first time that he was never particularly kind to her. He looked at the receiver, wishing he could run after her, and waited for Ricky to pick up his extension. His brother had just come in from trick-or-treating and was almost delirious with sated greed.

"Almond Roca, Nate!" he exulted. "Popcorn balls that are orange!"

"You can't eat the ones that aren't wrapped. Throw away the popcorn balls."

"Why?"

"Razor blades," said Nathan. He missed his brother so badly that it made him nervous to speak to Ricky on the phone. They talked to each other three times a week, but they could never generate any real silliness, and Nathan, in spite of himself, was always irritable and mocking, or stern.


THE SPHINX SPEAKS
Real estate is the best hedge against inflation.
You can't please everyone, so you've gotta please yourself.
Twenty minutes of an aerobic activity three times a week is all you need.
R. Chast

"Yeah," Ricky said excitedly. "Halloween razor blades. Oh, my God, Nate, someone gave me raisin bread! *Raisin bread*, Nate!"

"I don't believe it," said Nathan. "Ricky, guess what?"

"I bet it was Mrs. Gilette. Hey, what are you going to be? Galactus?"

Ricky had spent his entire life waiting for Nathan to dress as Galactus, the World Eater, for Halloween, which was something Nathan a long time ago had said he was going to do, not dreaming that Ricky would never forget it, and would even come to regard it as the greatest and most magical of all the magical promises that his older brother had ever broken. In this instance Nathan felt more guilty than usual about having to tell Ricky the sorry truth, and he swivelled around in his chair so that his mother wouldn't be able to see his face.

"I'm going as a guy in the process of having a good idea for a costume," he mumbled.

"Huh?"

"You wouldn't understand it."

"I don't understand it because it's dumb," said Ricky. "I can tell it must be dumb."

"Go to hell," said Nathan.

"Nathan," said Mrs. Shapiro.

"Go to hell *you*," said Ricky.

"Guess what? I can see without my glasses." He spun around to face his mother, and she looked at him with mild amazement.

"You mean you never have to wear them ever again?" said Ricky. Absently he added, "Now you won't be so ugly."

This thought had not occurred to Nathan. He heard the sound of a plastic bag full of candy bars being rummaged around in and felt that he had exhausted Ricky's attention span, just when he most needed to speak to him. This incompleteness was why Nathan had first come to hate talking on the telephone to his father, in the days of his parents' trial separation. Ricky tore open a wrapper and began to chew. Bit-O-Honey, from the sound of it. Nathan pictured his brother surrounded by candy, lying in his fancy bedroom in Boston on his bed shaped like a racing car. It was a big bedroom, with a large, empty alcove at the back, which Ricky claimed to be afraid of entering. Nathan imagined the Boston Halloween night through the windows in the dark alcove as Ricky would see it from his speeding bed. "The big brother is always uglier," Ricky said.

"I know you're only teasing me," said Nathan. As he had several times before, he felt very far away from his brother just then, as he felt far from Anne and his father and mother and everyone he knew, isolated in his love and anxiety, but for the first time the void around him seemed to offer a new perspective, as though he were standing safely on top of a house in the midst of a great flood. He had no desire to return Ricky's insults. He looked at Mrs. Shapiro, who, although she didn't know what Ricky had said, nodded her head. "I know I'm not ugly," said Nathan.

"No," said the sleepy little boy in Boston, flowing off away from Nathan on his bed of sweets. "You have nice shoulders."

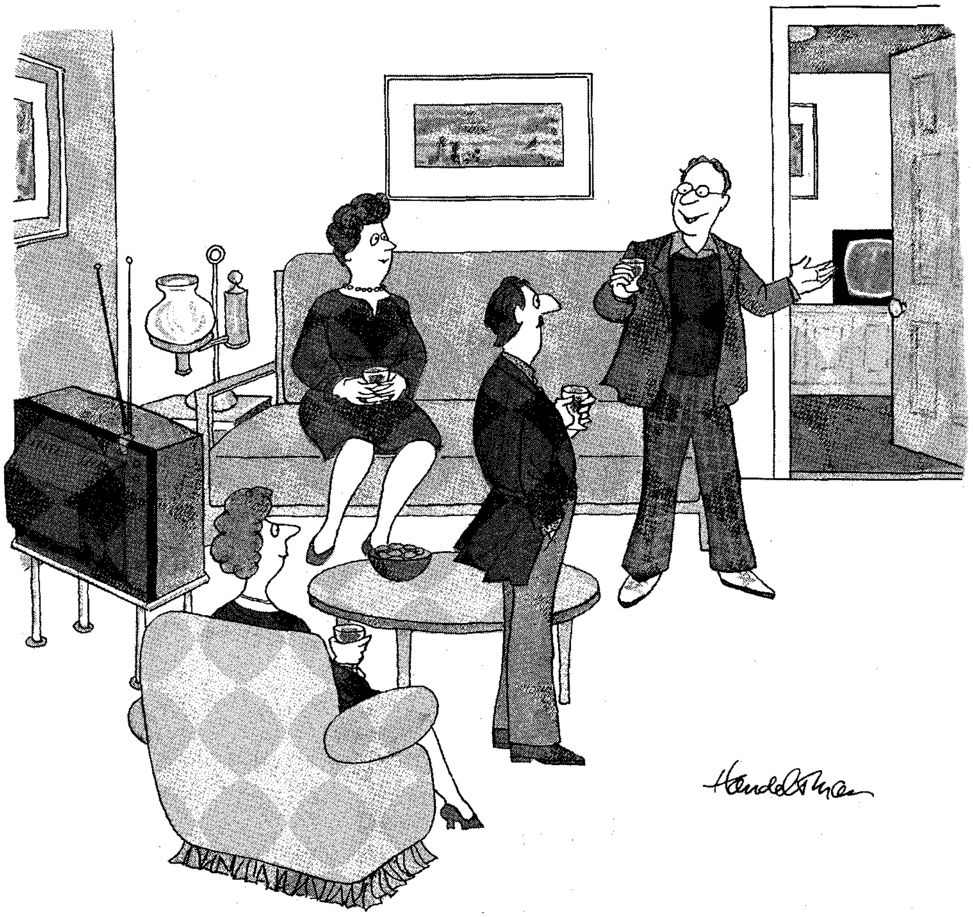
IT was as Nathan walked with his mother through the woods to the Parnells' house that he began to feel distinctly altered. These trees were going to be cut down soon, to make way for three new houses, and as he strode, barefaced, across the little wood, there seemed a particular clarity to the starlit Halloween air, a sharpness that hitherto he had only smelled, and the sight of the world struck him with the austere flavor of smoke and dead leaves. Up the street the beam of a child's flashlight tumbled to the ground, igniting the red oak leaves that littered the Parnells' lawn, and then flew upward, illuminating the bare tops of previously invisible trees.

"I can't believe it," said Nathan. "I must be cured."

"You look very nice without your glasses," said his mother. "You look like your father."

"Dad wears glasses."

"He didn't always," she said. She shivered in her coat, which was made from rabbits and had been the gift of Humberto, the Brazilian professional soccer player she had dated last winter.



"We decided to hang on to the old black-and-white set for watching colorized films."

"Do you think my concept is stupid, Mom?"

"I just don't really understand it, Nathan," said his mother. "I never really understand your jokes. I'm sure lots of people will think it's hilarious."

They came to the short incline of yellow lawn which rose to the cedar planks of the Parnells' front porch, and which was transected by a crooked line of stepping stones that led to the shallow goldfish pond beside the front door. Major Ray had been stationed for five years in Yokohama during the sixties, and the Parnells had returned with a houseful of Japanese things. The carved pumpkin shared the porch with a stone lamp shaped like a pointed Japanese house, and as Nathan and his mother stepped up to the front door—you could already hear them inside, dozens of laughing adults—it struck him that a jack-o'-lantern was truly a lantern. His last thought before Eleanor threw open the door was an idea for a science-fiction novel in which the denizens of a distant world furnished their lives with various giant vegetables, carving out their beds, dressing in long, curly peels, illuminating their homes with the light of pumpkins. Then the door flew open. In all his anxiety over his own wardrobe, in all the editing and revision of the tortured sentence he intended that night jauntily to pronounce to Eleanor, he had forgotten to wonder about what she might wear, and he found himself taken completely by surprise.

Nathan had been prey, of course, to night fantasies of Eleanor Parnell. He concocted these happy narratives of seduction with the same thoroughness he brought to all his imaginary projects, such as Davor, the Golden Planet, and the vast turnpike, each of its rest stops and motor courts carefully named, that he had once mapped across two hundred pages of his loose-leaf notebook. He had envisioned Mrs. Parnell in all manner of empty rooms, and on desert beaches, and under a remote lean-to in the Far West, but during these trysts she remained demurely clothed. (At those crucial moments when Eleanor began to remove her garments, Nathan's vision tended to falter.) But he had never imagined her in a black leather bikini, black cape, black boots, and black visor with a great pointed pair of black leather ears.

"I'm Batman," Eleanor said, giving Nathan a dry kiss on the cheek. "You look wonderful," she said to Mrs. Shapiro. She stepped back to examine Nathan, and her eyes narrowed within their moon-shaped black windows. "Nathan, you're a— You're a lamp. You're a lamppost."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Shapiro.

"That's right," said Nathan the Lamppost. "Ha, ha." He could not say whether it was desire he felt for her or total, irredeemable embarrassment.

"Nathan," said his mother. "You are not a lamp. Tell her."

"Come in," said Eleanor. "We're in the Yellow Room. So what are you, Nathan?"

She drew them into the house, taking their hands in her own, as was her habit. The Yellow Room was filled, as Nathan had known it would be, with alcohol and disco music and adulthood in its most intimidating aspect. Two dozen men and women in costume—Nathan spotted a knight, a baseball player, and some sort of witch or hag—held their drinks and shouted mildly at each other over the agitated music, and five or six couples were dancing in the middle of the room. Ever since his mother had become a single woman she had increasingly involved herself, it seemed, with adults who liked to dance—a sight that for Nathan had not lost its novelty. He especially enjoyed watching the diligent men as they jogged in place.

"O.K., I give up," Eleanor said. She turned to face him and Nathan stopped dead. "No, I don't." A pinched look crossed her face as she scanned his body, and she seemed to take in for the first time the poverty of Nathan's lamentable concept. Nathan blushed and looked away, though this was partly because he feared he had already looked too many times at her breasts and at her radiant stomach.

"Are you supposed to be Thomas Edison? Is that it? Are you Thomas Alva Edison?"

Nathan forced himself to meet the humiliation of her sympathetic gaze. He opened his mouth to explain, to tell her that he was indeed the Wizard of Menlo Park, on the verge of stealing fire.

"He's a guy in the process of having a good idea for a costume," said Mrs. Shapiro, crossing her arms and shrugging her tattooed shoulders. "What do you think of that?"

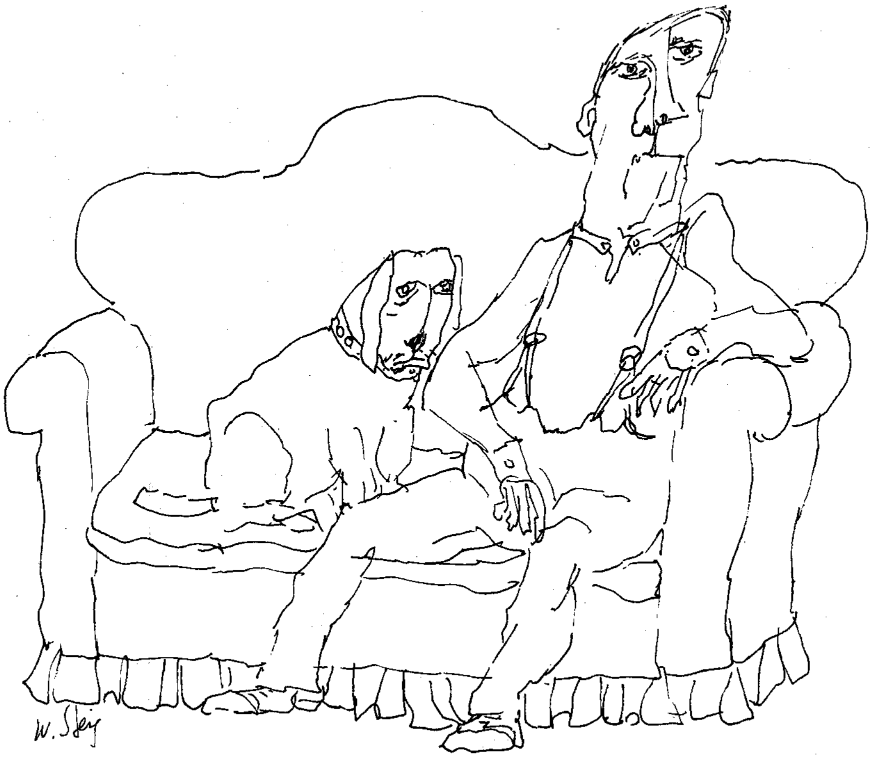
"Nathan," said Eleanor, smiling at Nathan and taking his chin between the long fingers of her hand. "You're such a strange young man."

She laughed her magpie's laugh, and in her hooded eyes Nathan read both pain and amusement, as though she already knew that he loved her. Then she turned away from him, and the two women put their arms around one another—a habit his mother had picked up from Eleanor, who had learned it from Major Ray, who put his arm around everybody. They went to the long table, draped by a black paper tablecloth, that served as the bar. Major Ray, wearing his Bruce Wayne smoking jacket, came over to hug Mrs. Shapiro. He said something to her, she laughed, and then he led her off to one side, so that Eleanor was left momentarily alone. For a moment Nathan, suffused with the careless, wild-haired courage of an inventor, contemplated Eleanor in her racy suit. He took a step toward her, then another, tentatively, gathering all his strength, as though about to throw a heavy switch that would, if his calculations were correct, bring light to a hundred cities and ten thousand darkened rooms. He was going to ask her to dance—that was all. In the few seconds before he reached her bat-winged side he searched his memory for a suave line or smooth invitation from some movie, but all he could think of at that moment was "Young Mr. Lincoln." "Eleanor," he said, "I would like to dance with you in the worst way."

Eleanor smiled, then leaned close to him and put her hand on his shoulder, her lips to his ear. For a long time she hesitated. "I know a couple of very bad ways," she said at last, "but you're too young for them, Nathan."

"I suppose so," he said, almost happily. He doffed his wire hat and set it down on the bar. There was now nothing on his face or his temples, and he felt light, almost headless, as he imagined he would feel on the brilliant evening he tried liquor for the first time. He took her hand, peacefully, and put it over his eyes, then covered her visor with his own damp palm. They stood a moment in this darkness. Then he said, "Guess who I am now."

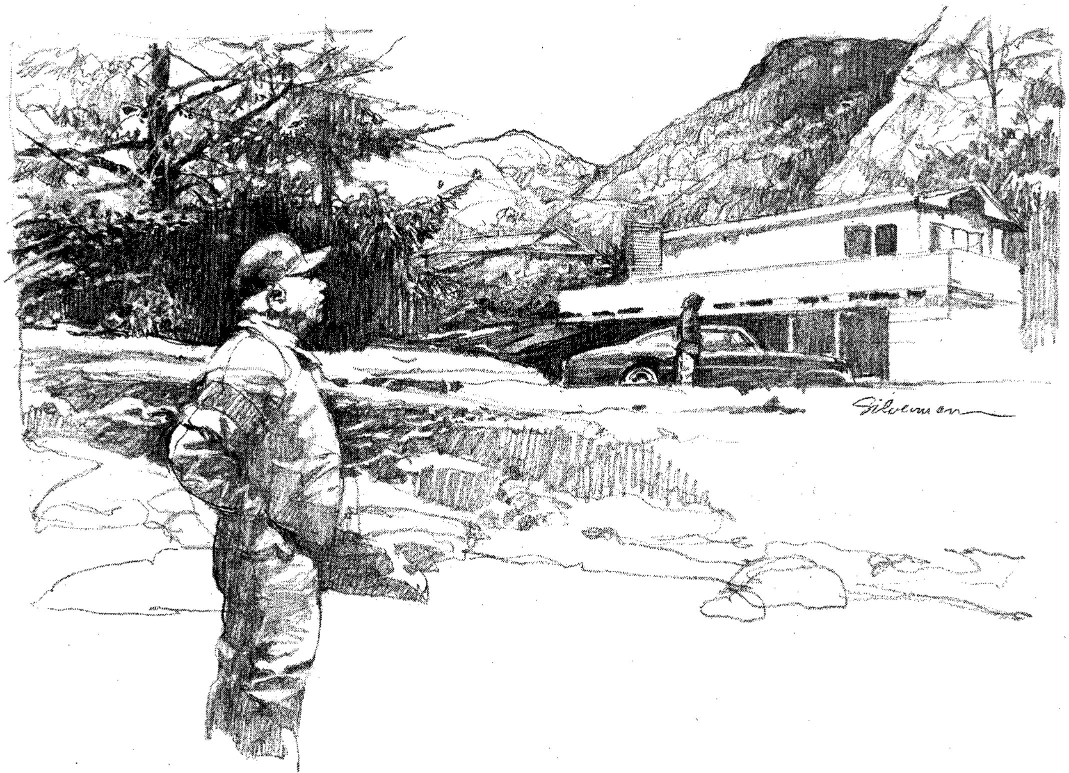
—MICHAEL CHABON



Damon and Pythias

THE CONTROL OF NATURE

LOS ANGELES AGAINST THE MOUNTAINS—I



IN Los Angeles versus the San Gabriel Mountains, it is not always clear which side is losing. For example, the Genofiles, Bob and Jackie, can claim to have lost and won. They live on an acre of ground so high that they look across their pool and past the trunks of big pines at an aerial view over Glendale and across Los Angeles to the Pacific bays. The setting, in cool dry air, is serene and Mediterranean. It has not been everlastingly serene.

On a February night some years ago, the Genofiles were awakened by a crash of thunder—lightning striking the mountain front. Ordinarily, in their quiet neighborhood, only the creek beside them was likely to make much sound, dropping steeply out of Shields Canyon on its way to the Los Angeles River. The creek, like every component of all the river systems across the city from mountains to ocean, had not been left to nature. Its banks were concrete. Its bed was concrete. When boulders were running there, they sounded like a rolling freight. On a night like this, the boulders should have been running. The creek should have been a torrent. Its unnatural sound was unnaturally absent. There was, and had been, a lot of rain.

The Genofiles had two teen-age children, whose rooms were on the uphill side of the one-story house. The window in Scott's room looked straight up Pine Cone Road, a cul-de-sac, which, with hundreds like it, defined the northern limit of the city, the confrontation of the urban and the wild. Los Angeles is overmatched on one side by the Pacific Ocean and on the other by very high mountains. With respect to these principal boundaries, Los Angeles is done sprawling. The San Gabriels, in their state of tectonic youth, are rising as rapidly as any range on earth. Their loose inimical slopes flout the tolerance of the angle of repose. Rising straight up out of the megalopolis, they stand ten thousand feet above the nearby sea, and they are not kidding with this city. Shedding, spalling, self-destructing, they are disintegrating at a rate that is also among the fastest in the world. The phalanxed communities of Los Angeles have pushed themselves hard against these mountains, an aggression that requires a deep defense budget to contend with the results. Kimberlee Genofile called to her mother, who joined her in Scott's room as they looked up the street. From its high turnaround, Pine Cone Road plunges downhill like a ski run, bending left and then right and then left and then right in steep christiania turns for half a mile above a three-hundred-foot straightaway that aims directly at the Genofiles' house. Not far below the turnaround, Shields Creek passes under the street, and there a kink in its concrete profile had been plugged by mud and a six-foot boulder. Hence the silence of the creek. The water was now spreading over the street. It descended in heavy sheets. As the young Genofiles and their mother glimpsed it in the all but total darkness, the scene was suddenly illuminated by a blue electrical flash. In the blue light they saw a massive blackness, moving. It was not a landslide, not a mudslide, not a rock avalanche; nor by any means was it the front of a conventional flood. In Jackie's words, "It was just one big black thing coming at us, rolling, rolling with a lot of water in front of it, pushing the water, this big black thing. It was just one big black hill coming toward us."

In geology, it would be known as a debris flow. Debris flows amass in stream valleys and more or less resemble fresh concrete. They consist of water mixed with a good deal of solid material, most of which is above sand size. Some of it is Chevrolet size. Boulders bigger than cars ride long distances in debris flows. Boulders grouped like fish eggs pour downhill in debris flows. The dark material coming toward the Genofiles was not only full of boulders; it was so full of automobiles it was like bread dough mixed with raisins. On its way down Pine Cone Road, it plucked up cars from driveways and the street. When it crashed into the Genofiles' house, the shattering of safety glass made terrific explosive sounds. A door burst open. Mud and boulders poured into the hall. We're going to go, Jackie thought. Oh, my God, what a hell of a way for the four of us to die together.

The parents' bedroom was on the far side of the house. Bob Genofile was in there kicking through white satin draperies at the panelled glass, smashing it to provide an outlet for water, when the three others ran in to join him. The walls of the house neither moved nor shook. As a general contractor, Bob had built dams, department stores, hospitals, six schools, seven churches, and this house. It was made of concrete block with steel reinforcement, sixteen inches on center. His wife had said it was stronger than any dam in California. His crew had called it "the fort." In those days, twenty years before, the Genofiles' acre was close by the edge of the mountain brush, but a developer had come along since then and knocked down thousands of trees and put Pine Cone Road up the slope. Now Bob Genofile was thinking, I hope the roof holds. I hope the roof is strong enough to hold. Debris was flowing over it. He told Scott to shut the bedroom door. No sooner was the door closed than it was battered down and fell into the room. Mud, rock, water poured in. It pushed everybody against the far wall. "Jump on the bed," Bob said. The bed began to rise. Kneeling on it—on a gold velvet spread—they could soon press their palms against the ceiling. The bed also moved toward the glass wall. The two teen-agers got off, to try to control the motion, and were pinned between the bed's brass railing and the wall. Boulders went up against the railing, pressed it into their legs, and held them fast. Bob dived into the muck to try to move the boulders, but he failed. The debris flow, entering through windows as well as doors, continued to rise. Escape was still possible for the parents but not for the children. The parents looked at each other and did not stir. Each reached for and held one of the children. Their mother felt suddenly resigned, sure that her son and daughter would die and she and her husband would quickly follow. The house became buried to the eaves. Boulders sat on the roof. Thirteen automobiles were packed around the building, including five in the pool. A din of rocks kept banging against them. The stuck horn of a buried car was blaring. The family in the darkness in their fixed tableau watched one another by the light of a directional signal, endlessly blinking. The house had filled up in six minutes, and the mud stopped rising near the children's chins.

CHINA JOURNAL

North wind like a fine drill
sky Ming porcelain for a thousand miles
The danger of what's-to-come is not in its distance
Two inches can break the heart
(*Great Wall*)

Halfway to Chengdu; past noon.
Against the brown riprap and scree grass
Two peach trees in blossom,
speechless from daybreak till now.
(*Jialing River*)

Sky color of old steam
the power that moves what moves
Moves as the Buddha moves unmoving
great river goes eastward
(*Leshan*)

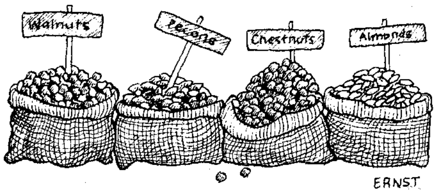
The emperor's men are dust-red from eternity,
Quince tree pale cinnabar in the field.
Invisible as dewdrops in the afterlife, time thumbs us,
Not lightly here, but not lightly there.
(*Xi'an*)

—Charles Wright

• •

STORIES like that do not always have such happy endings. A man went outside to pick up his newspaper one morning, heard a sound, turned, and died of a heart attack as he saw his house crushed to pieces with his wife and two children inside. People have been buried alive in their beds. But such cases are infrequent. Debris flows generally are much less destructive of life than of property. People get out of the way.

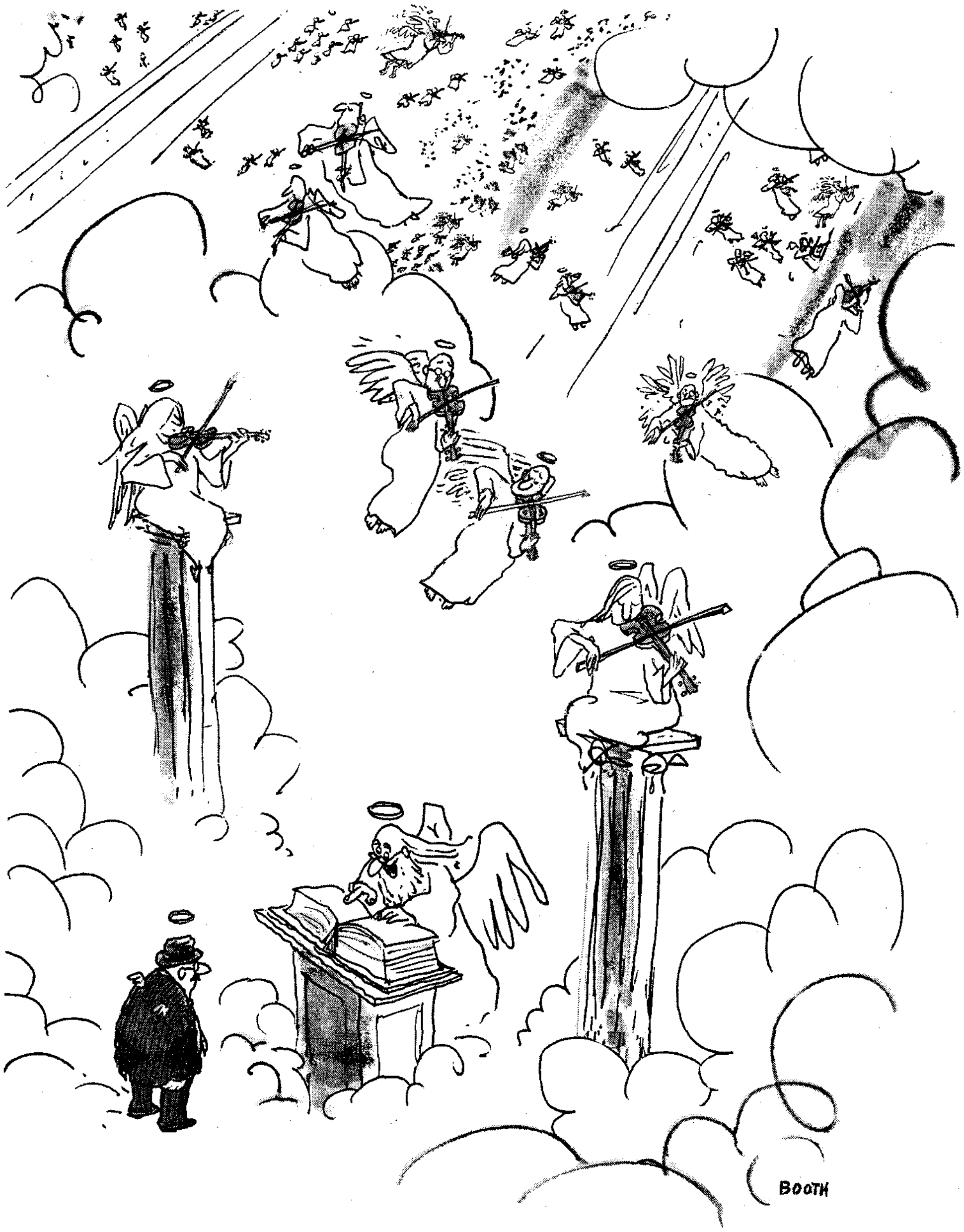
If they try to escape by automobile, they have made an obvious but imperfect choice. Norman Reid backed his Pontiac into the street one January morning and was caught from behind by rock porridge. It embedded the car to the chrome strips. Fifty years of archival news photographs show cars of every vintage standing like hippos in chunky muck. The upper halves of their headlights peep above the surface. The late Roland Case Ross, an emeritus professor at California State University, told me of a day in the early thirties when he watched a couple rushing to escape by car. She got in first. While her husband was going around to get in his side, she got out and ran into the house for more silverware. When the car at last putt-putted downhill, a wall of debris was nudging the bumper. The debris stayed on the vehicle's heels all the way to Foothill Boulevard, where the car turned left.



Foothill Boulevard was U.S. Route 66—the western end of the rainbow. Through Glendora, Azusa, Pasadena, it paralleled the mountain front. It strung the metropolitan border towns. And it brought in emigrants to fill them up. The real-estate line of maximum advance now averages more than a mile above Foothill, but Foothill receives its share of rocks. A debris flow that passed through the Monrovia Nursery went on to Foothill and beyond. With its twenty million plants in twelve hundred varieties, Monrovia was the foremost container nursery in the world, and in its recovery has remained so. The debris flow went through the place picking up pots and cans. It got into a greenhouse two hundred feet long and smashed out the southern wall, taking bougainvillea and hibiscus with it. Arby's, below Foothill, blamed the nursery for damages, citing the hibiscus that had come with the rocks. Arby's sought compensation, but no one was buying beef that thin.

In the same storm, large tree trunks rode in the debris like javelins and broke through the sides of houses. Automobiles went in through picture windows. A debris flow hit the gym at Azusa Pacific College and knocked a large hole in the upslope wall. In the words of Cliff Hamlow, the basketball coach, "If we'd had students in there, it would have killed them. Someone said it sounded like the roar of a jet engine. It filled the gym up with mud, and with boulders two and three feet in diameter. It went out through the south doors and spread all over the football field and track. Chain-link fencing was sheared off—like it had been cut with a welder. The place looked like a war zone." Azusa Pacific College wins national championships in track, but Coach Hamlow's basketball team (12–18) can't get the boulders out of its game.

When a debris flow went through the Verdugo Hills Cemetery, which is up a couple of switchbacks on the mountain front, two of the central figures there, resting under impressive stones, were "Hiram F. Hatch, 1st Lieut. 6th Mich. Inf., December 24, 1843–October 12, 1922," and "Henry J. Hatch, Brigadier General, United States Army, April 28, 1869–December 31, 1931." The two Hatches held the hill while many of their comrades slid below. In all, thirty-five coffins came out of the cemetery and took off for lower ground. They went down Hillrose Street and were scattered over half a mile. One came to rest in the parking lot of a supermarket. Many were reburied by debris and, in various people's yards, were not immediately found. Three turned up in one yard. Don Sulots, who had moved into the fallout path two months before, said, "It sounded like thunder. By the time I made it to the front door and got it open, the muck was already three feet high. It's quite a way to start off life in a new home—mud, rocks, and bodies all around."

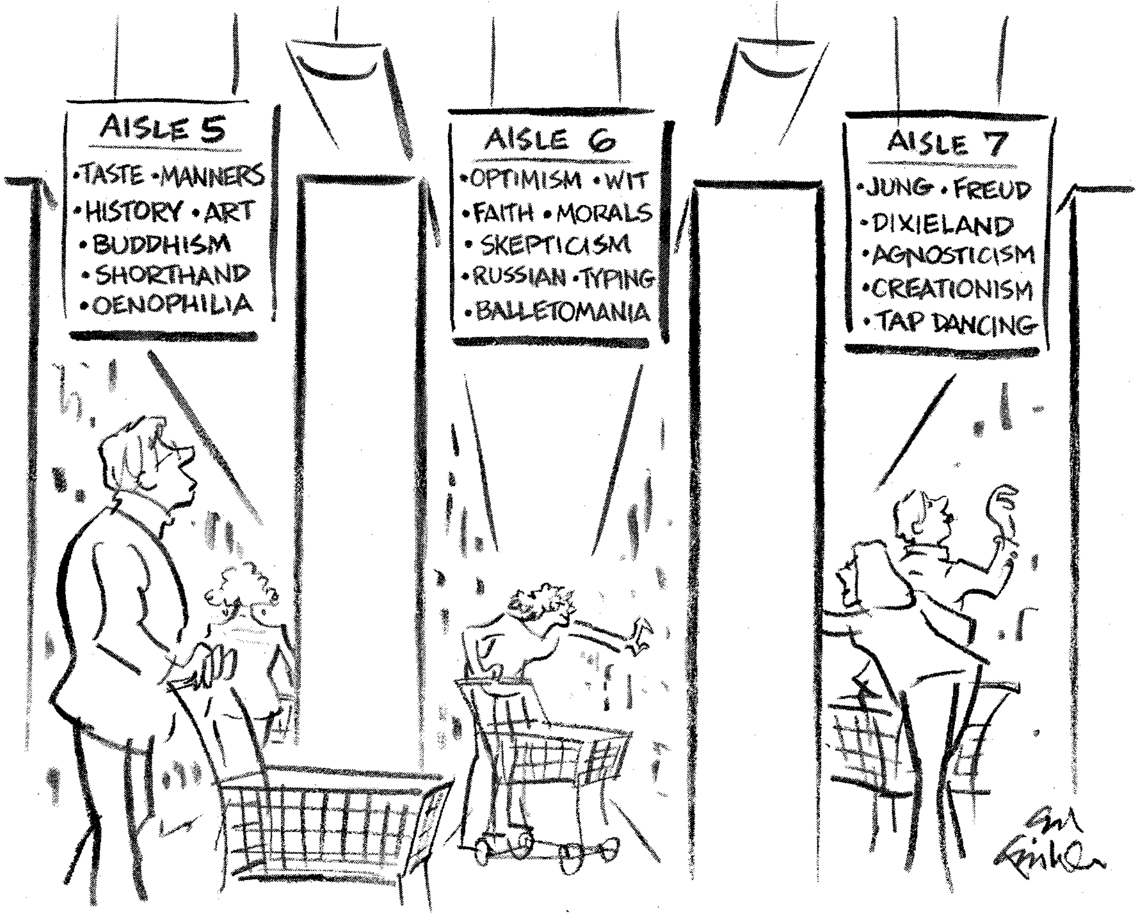


"Malcolm W. Dunlap, violin repairs. Malcolm, we are so pleased to see you."

• •

Most people along the mountain front are about as mindful of debris flows as those corpses were. Here today, gone tomorrow. Those who worry build barricades. They build things called deflection walls—a practice that raises legal antennae and, when the caroming debris breaks into the home of a neighbor, probes the wisdom of Robert Frost. At least one family has experienced so many debris flows coming through their back yard that they long ago installed overhead doors in the rear end of their built-in garage. To guide the flows, they put deflection walls in their back yard. Now when the boulders come they open both ends of their garage, and the debris goes through to the street.

Between Harrow Canyon and Englewild Canyon, a private street called Glencoe Heights teased the mountain front. Came a time of unprecedented rain, and the neighborhood grew ever more fearful—became in fact so infused with catastrophic anticipation that it sought the drastic sort of action that only a bulldozer could provide. A



fire had swept the mountainsides, leaving them vulnerable, dark, and bare. Expecting floods of mud and rock, people had piled sandbags and built heavy wooden walls. Their anxiety was continuous for many months. "This threat is on your mind all the time," Gary Lukehart said. "Every time you leave the house, you stop and put up another sandbag, and you just hope everything will be all right when you get back." Lukehart was accustomed to losing in Los Angeles. In the 1957 Rose Bowl, he was Oregon State's quarterback. A private street could not call upon city or county for the use of heavy equipment, so in the dead of night, as steady rain was falling, a call was put in to John McCafferty—bulldozer for hire. McCafferty had a closeup knowledge of the dynamics of debris flows: he had worked the mountain front from San Dimas to Sierra Madre, which to him is Sarah Modri. ("In those canyons at night, you could hear them big boulders comin'. They sounded like thunder.") He arrived at Glencoe Heights within the hour and set about turning the middle of the street into the Grand Canal of Venice. His Cat was actually not a simple dozer but a 955 loader on tracks, with a two-and-a-quarter-yard bucket seven feet wide. Cutting water mains, gas mains, and sewers, he made a ditch that eventually extended five hundred feet and was deep enough to take in three thousand tons of debris. After working for five hours, he happened to be by John Caufield's place ("It had quit rainin', it looked like the worst was over") when Caufield came out and said, "Mac, you sure have saved my bacon."

McCafferty continues, "All of a sudden, we looked up at the mountains—it's not too far from his house to the mountains, maybe a hundred and fifty feet—and we could just see it all comin'. It seemed the whole mountain had come loose. It flowed like cement." In the ditch, he put the Cat in reverse and backed away from the oncoming debris. He backed three hundred feet. He went up one side of the ditch and was about halfway out of it when the mud and boulders caught the Cat and covered it over the hood. In the cab, the mud pushed against McCafferty's legs. At the same time, debris broke into Caufield's house through the front door and the dining-room window, and in five minutes filled it to the eaves.

Other houses were destroyed as well. A garage left the neighborhood with a car in it. One house was buried twice. (After McCafferty dug it out, it was covered again.) His ditch, however, was effective, and saved many places on slightly higher ground, among them Gary Lukehart's and the home of John Marcellino, the chief executive officer of Mackinac Island Fudge. McCafferty was promised a lifetime supply of fudge. He was on the scene for several days, and in one span worked twenty-four hours without a break. The people of the street brought him chocolate milkshakes. He had left his lowbed parked around the corner. When at last he returned to it and prepared to go home, he discovered that a cop had given him a ticket.

A METROPOLIS that exists in a semidesert, imports water three hundred miles, has inveterate flash floods, is at the grinding edges of two tectonic plates, and has a microclimate tenacious of noxious oxides will have its priorities among the aspects of its environment that it attempts to control. For example, Los Angeles makes money catching water. In a few days in 1983, it caught twenty-eight million dollars' worth of water. In one period of twenty-four hours, however, the ocean hit the city with twenty-foot waves, a tornado made its own freeway, debris flows poured from the San Gabriel front, and an earthquake shook the region. Nature's invoice was forty million dollars. Later, twenty million more was spent dealing with the mountain debris.

There were those who would be quick—and correct—in saying that were it not for the alert unflinching manner and imaginative strategies by which Los Angeles outwits the mountains, nature's invoices at such times would run into the billions. The rear-

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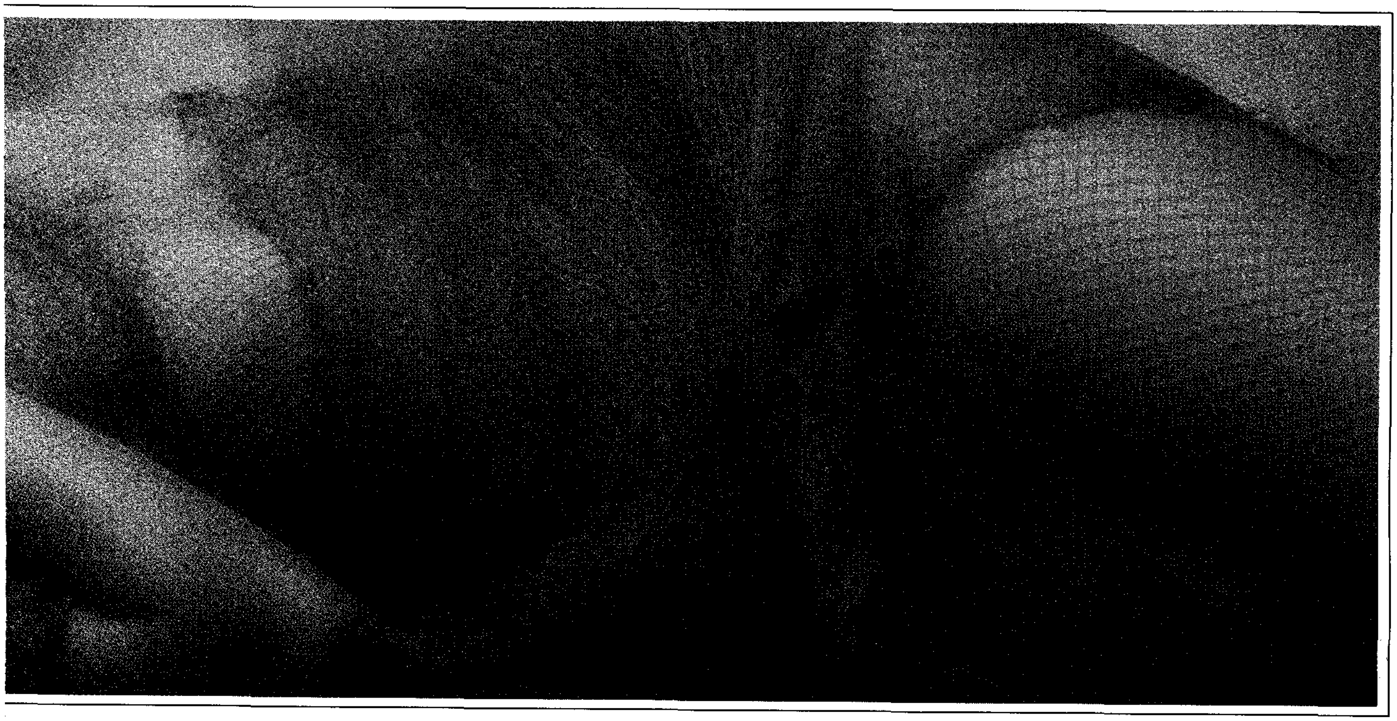

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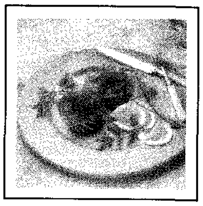

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guard defenses are spread throughout the city and include more than two thousand miles of underground conduits and concrete-lined open stream channels—a web of engineering that does not so much reinforce as replace the natural river systems. The front line of battle is where the people meet the mountains—up the steep slopes where the subdivisions stop and the brush begins.

Strung out along the San Gabriel front are at least a hundred and twenty bowl-shaped excavations that resemble football stadiums and are often as large. Years ago, when a big storm left back yards and boulevards five feet deep in scree, one neighborhood came through amazingly unscathed, because it happened to surround a gravel pit that had filled up instead. A tungsten filament went on somewhere above Los Angeles. The county began digging pits to catch debris. They were quarries, in a sense, but exceedingly bizarre quarries, in that the rock was meant to come to them. They are known as debris basins. Blocked at their downstream ends with earthfill or concrete constructions, they are also known as debris dams. With clean spillways and empty reservoirs, they stand ready to capture rivers of boulders—these deep dry craters, lying close above the properties they protect. In the overflowing abundance of urban nomenclature, the individual names of such basins are obscure, until a day when they appear in a headline in the Los Angeles *Times:* Harrow, Englewild, Zachau, Dunsmuir, Shields, Big Dalton, Hog, Hook East, Hook West, Limekiln, Starfall, Sawpit, Santa Anita. For fifty miles, they mark the wild boundary like bulbs beside a mirror. Behind chain links, their idle ovate forms more than suggest defense. They are separated, on the average, by seven hundred yards. In aggregate, they are worth hundreds of millions of dollars. All this to keep the mountains from falling on Johnny Carson.

The principal agency that developed the debris basins was the hopefully named Los Angeles County Flood Control District, known familiarly through the region as Flood Control, and even more intimately as Flood. ("When I was at Flood, one of our dams filled with debris overnight," a former employee remarked to me. "If any more rain came, we were going to have to evacuate the whole of Pasadena.") There has been a semantic readjustment, obviously intended to acknowledge that when a flood pours out of the mountains it might be half rock. The debris basins are now in the charge of the newly titled Sedimentation Section of the Hydraulic Division of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. People still call it Flood. By whatever name the agency is called, its essential tactic remains unaltered. This was summarized for me in a few words by an engineer named Donald Nichols, who pointed out that eight million people live below the mountains on the urban coastal plain, within an area large enough to accommodate Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, and New York. He said, "To make the area inhabitable, you had to put in lined channels on the plain and halt the debris at the front. If you don't take it out at the front, it will come out in the plain, filling up channels. A filled channel won't carry diddly-boo."

To stabilize mountain streambeds and stop descending rocks even before they reach the debris basins, numerous crib structures (barriers made of concrete slats) have been emplaced in high canyons—the idea being to convert plunging streams into boulder staircases, and hypothetically cause erosion to work against itself. Farther into the mountains, a dozen dams of some magnitude were built in the nineteen-twenties and thirties to control floods and conserve water. Because they are in the San Gabriels, they inadvertently trap large volumes of debris. One of them—the San Gabriel Dam, in the San Gabriel River—was actually built as a debris-control structure. Its reservoir, which is regularly cleaned out, contains, at the moment, twenty million tons of mountain.

The San Gabriel River, the Los Angeles River, and the Big Tujunga (Bigta Hung-ga) are the principal streams that enter the urban plain, where a channel that filled with rock wouldn't carry diddly-boo. Three colossal debris basins—as different in style as in magnitude from those on the mountain front—have been constructed on the plain to greet these rivers. Where the San Gabriel goes

HOW DID THIS CASE EVER GET SO FAR?
WHY DID I EVER AGREE TO TRY THIS THING?
BOY! THIS IS NEAT!
Leo Cullum

past Azusa on its way to Alamitos Bay, the Army Corps of Engineers completed in the late nineteen-forties a dam ninety-two feet high and twenty-four thousand feet wide—this to stop a river that is often dry, and trickles most of the year. Santa Fe Dam, as it is called, gives up at a glance its own story, for it is made of boulders that are shaped like potatoes and are generally the size of watermelons. They imply a large volume of water flowing with high energy. They are stream-propelled, stream-rounded boulders, and the San Gabriel is the stream. In Santa Fe Basin, behind the dam, the dry bed of the San Gabriel is half a mile wide. The boulder-strewn basin in its entirety is four times as wide as that. It occupies eighteen hundred acres in all, nearly three square miles, of what would be prime real estate were it not for the recurrent arrival of rocks. The scene could have been radioed home from Mars, whose cobbly face is in part the result of debris flows dating to a time when Mars had surface water.

The equally vast Sepulveda Basin is where Los Angeles receives and restrains the Los Angeles River. In Sepulveda Basin are three golf courses, which lend ample support to the widespread notion that everything in Los Angeles is disposable. Advancing this national prejudice even further, debris flows, mudslides, and related phenomena have "provided literary minds with a ready-made metaphor of the alleged moral decay of Los Angeles." The words belong to Reyner Banham, late professor of the history of architecture at University College, London, whose passionate love of Los Angeles left him without visible peers. The decay was only "alleged," he said. Of such nonsense he was having none. With his "Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies," Banham had become to this deprecated, defamed, traduced, and disparaged metropolis what Pericles was to Athens. Banham knew why the basins were there and what the people were defending. While all those neurasthenic literary minds are cowering somewhere in ethical crawl space, the quality of Los Angeles life rises up the mountain front. There is air there. Cool is the evening under the crumbling peaks. Cool descending air. Clean air. Air with a view. "The financial and topographical contours correspond almost exactly," Banham said. Among those "narrow, tortuous

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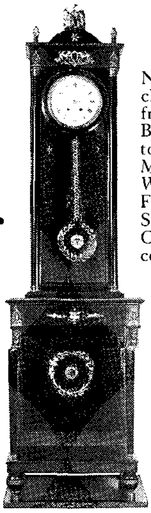

Napoleonic clock, a gift from Bonaparte to his Minister of War, 1806. From The Stanford Court collection.

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residential roads serving precipitous house-plots that often back up directly on unimproved wilderness" is "the fat life of the delectable mountains."

People of Gardena, Inglewood, and Watts no less than Azusa and Altadena pay for the defense of the mountain front, the rationale being that debris trapped near its source will not move down and choke the channels of the inner city, causing urban floods. The political City of Los Angeles—in its vague and tentacular configuration—actually abuts the San Gabriels for twenty miles or so, in much the way that it extends to touch the ocean in widely separated places like Venice, San Pedro, and Pacific Palisades. Los Angeles County reaches across the mountains and far into the Mojave Desert. The words "Los Angeles" as generally used here refer neither to the political city nor to the county but to the multinamed urban integrity that has a street in it seventy miles long (Sepulveda Boulevard) and, from the Pacific Ocean at least to Pomona, moves north against the mountains as a comprehensive town.

The debris basins vary greatly in size—not, of course, in relation to the populations they defend but in relation to the watersheds and washes above them in the mountains. For the most part, they are associated with small catchments, and the excavated basins are commensurately modest, with capacities under a hundred thousand cubic yards. In a typical empty reservoir—whatever its over-all dimensions may be—stands a columnar tower that resembles a campanile. Full of holes, it is known as a perforated riser. As the basin fills with a thick-flowing slurry of water, mud, and rock, the water goes into the tower and is drawn off below. The county calls this water harvesting.

Like the freeways, the debris-control system ordinarily functions but occasionally jams. When the Genofiles' swimming pool filled with cars, debris flows descended into other neighborhoods along that part of the front. One hit a culvert, plugged the culvert, crossed a road in a bouldery wave, flattened fences, filled a debris basin, went over the spillway, and spread among houses lying below, shoving them off their foundations. The debris basins have caught as much as six hundred thousand cubic yards in one storm. Over time, they have trapped some twenty million tons of mud and rock. Inevitably, sometimes something gets away.

At Devils Gate—just above the Rose Bowl, in Pasadena—a dam was built in 1920 with control of water its only objective. Yet its reservoir, with a surface of more than a hundred acres, has filled to the brim with four million tons of rock, gravel, and sand. A private operator has set up a sand-and-gravel quarry in the reservoir. Almost exactly, he takes out what the mountains put in. As one engineer has described it, "he pays Flood, and Flood makes out like a champ."

IT was assumed that the Genofiles were dead. Firemen and paramedics who came into the neighborhood took one glance at the engulfed house and went elsewhere in search of people needing help. As the family remained trapped, perhaps an hour went by. They have no idea.

"We didn't know why it had come or how long it was going to last."

They lost all sense of time. The stuck horn went on blaring, the directional signal eerily blinking. They imagined that more debris was on the way.

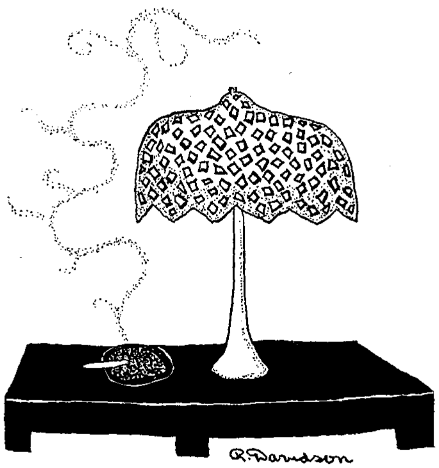
"We didn't know if the whole mountain was coming down."

As they waited in the all but total darkness, Jackie thought of neighbors' children. "I thought, Oh, my gosh, all those little kids are dead. Actually, they were O.K. And the neighbors thought for sure we were all gone. All our neighbors thought we were gone."

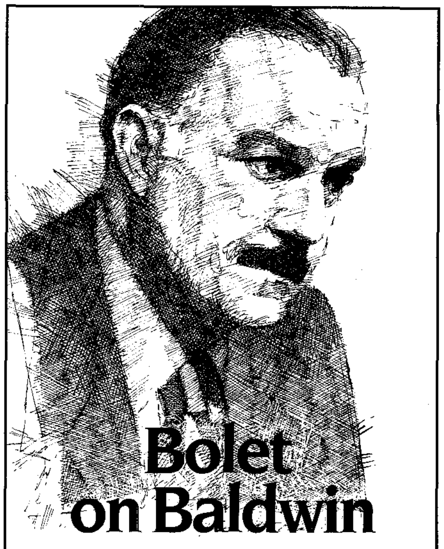
At length, a neighbor approached their house and called out, "Are you alive?"

"Yes. But we need help."

As the debris flow hit the Genofiles' house, it also hit a six-ton truck from the L.A.C.F.C.D., the vigilant bureau called Flood. Vigilance was about all that the L.A.C.F.C.D. had been able to offer. The patrolling vehicle and its crew of two were as helpless as everyone else. Each of the crewmen had lived twenty-six years, and each came close to ending it there. Minutes before the flow arrived, the truck labored up Pine Cone Road—a forty-one-percent grade, steep enough to stiff a Maserati. The two men meant to check on a debris basin at the top. Known as Upper Shields, it was less than two years old, and had been built in anticipation of the event that was about to occur. Oddly enough, the Genofiles and their neighbors were bracketed with debris basins—Upper Shields above them, Shields itself below them, six times as large. Shields Debris Basin, with its arterial concrete feeder channels, was prepared to catch fifty thousand tons. The Genofiles' house looked out over Shields as if it were an empty lake, its shores hedged about with oleander. When the developer extended Pine Cone Road up into the brush, the need for Upper Shields was apparent. The new basin came in the nick of time but—with a capacity under six thousand cubic yards—not in the nick of space. Just below it was a chain-link gate. As the six-ton truck approached the gate, mud was oozing through. The basin above had filled in minutes, and now, suddenly, boulders shot like cannonballs over the crest of the dam, with mud, cobbles, water, and trees. Chris Terracciano, the driver, radioed to headquarters, "It's coming over." Then he whipped the truck around and fled. The debris flow came through the chain-link barrier as if the links were made of paper. Steel posts broke off. As the truck accelerated down the steep hill, the debris flow chased and caught it. Boulders bounced against it. It was hit by empty automobiles spinning and revolving in the muck. The whole descending complex gathered force with distance. Terracciano later said, "I thought I was dead the whole way." The truck finally stopped when it bashed against a tree and a cement-block wall. The rear window shattered. Terracciano's partner suffered a broken leg. The two men crawled out through the window and escaped over the wall.



Within a few miles, other trapped patrols were calling in to say, "It's coming over." Zachau went over—into Sunland. Haines went over—into



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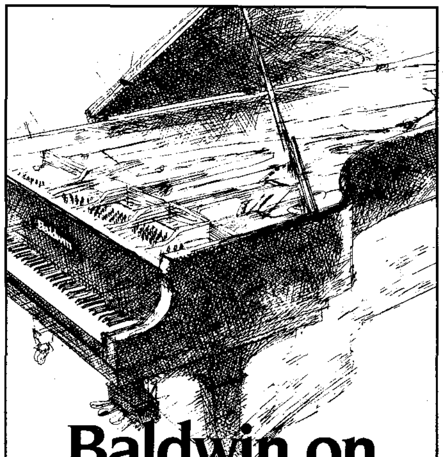
Tujunga. Dunsmuir went over—into Highway Highlands. As bulldozers plow out the streets after events like these, the neighborhoods of northern Los Angeles assume a macabre resemblance to New England villages under deep snow: the cleared paths, the vehicular rights-of-way, the parking meters buried within the high banks, the half-covered drift-girt homes. A street that is lined with palms will have debris berms ten feet up the palms. In the Genofiles' front yard, the drift was twelve feet deep. A person, without climbing, could walk onto the roof. Scott's bedroom had a few inches of space left at the top. Kimberlee's had mud on the ceiling. On the terrace, the crushed vehicles, the detached erratic wheels suggested bomb damage, artillery hits, the track of the Fifth Army. The place looked like a destroyed pillbox. No wonder people assumed that no one had survived inside.

There was a white sedan under the house eaves crushed to half its height, with two large boulders resting on top of it. Near the pool, a Volkswagen bug lay squashed. Another car was literally wrapped around a tree, like a C-clamp, its front and rear bumpers pointing in the same direction. A crushed pickup had boulders all over it, each a good deal heavier than anything a pickup could carry. One of the cars in the swimming pool was upside down, its tires in the air. A Volkswagen was on top of it. Bob Genofile—owner, contractor, victim—walked around in rubber boots, a visored construction cap, a foul-weather jacket, studying the damage, mostly guessing at what he couldn't see. A big, strongly built, leonine man with prematurely white hair, he looked like a middle linebacker near the end of a heavy day. He wondered if the house was still on its foundation, but there was no telling in this profound chaos, now hardening and cracking like bad concrete. In time, as his house was excavated from the inside, he would find that it had not budged. Not one wall had so much as cracked. He was uninsured, but down in the rubble was a compensation of greater value than insurance. Forever, he could say, as he quietly does when he tells the story, "I built it, man."

Kimberlee's birthday came two days after the debris. She was a college student, turning nineteen, and her father had had a gift for her that he was keeping in his wallet. "I had nineteen



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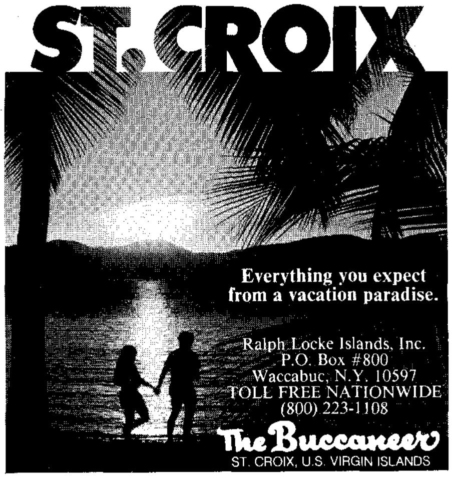

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fifty-dollar bills to give her for her birthday, but my pants and everything was gone."

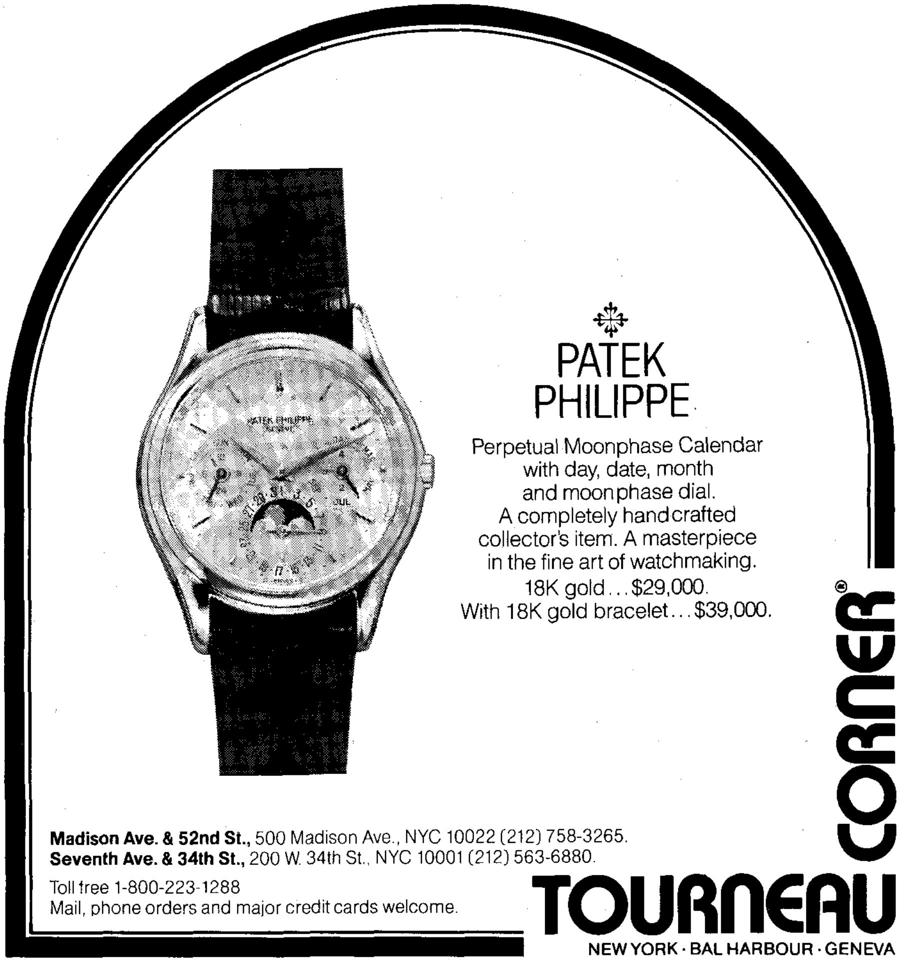
Young Scott, walking around in the wreckage, saw a belt sticking out of the muck like a night crawler after rain. He pulled at it, and the buried pants came with it. The wallet was still in the pants. The wallet still contained what every daughter wants for her birthday: an album of portraits of U. S. Grant, no matter if Ulysses is wet or dry.

The living room had just been decorated, and in six minutes the job had been destroyed—"the pale tangerines and greens, Italian-style furniture with marble, and all that." Jackie Genofile continues the story: "We had been out that night, and, you know, you wear your better jewelry. I came home like an idiot and put mine on the dresser. Bob put his on the dresser. Three weeks later, when some workers were cleaning debris out of the bedroom, they found his rings on the floor. They did not find mine. But—can you believe it?—a year and a half later Scott was down in the debris basin with one of his friends, and the Flood Control had these trucks there cleaning it out, and Scott saw this shiny thing, and he picked it up, and it was my ring that Bob had given me just before the storm."

Before the storm, they had not in any way felt threatened. Like their neighbors, they were confident of the debris basins, of the concrete liners of the nearby stream. After the storm, neighbors moved away. Where Pine Cone Road swung left or right, the debris had made centrifugal leaps, breaking into houses. A hydrant snapped off, and arcing water shot through an upstairs window. A child nearly drowned inside his own house. The family moved. "Another family that moved owned one of the cars that ended up in our pool," Jackie told me. "The husband said he'd never want to live here again, you know. And she was in real estate."

After the storm, the Genofiles tended to wake in the night, startled and anxious. They still do. "I wake up once in a while really uptight," Bob said. "I can just feel it—go through the whole thing, you know."

Jackie said that when rain pounds on a roof, anywhere she happens to be, she will become tense. Once, she took her dog and her pillow and went to sleep in



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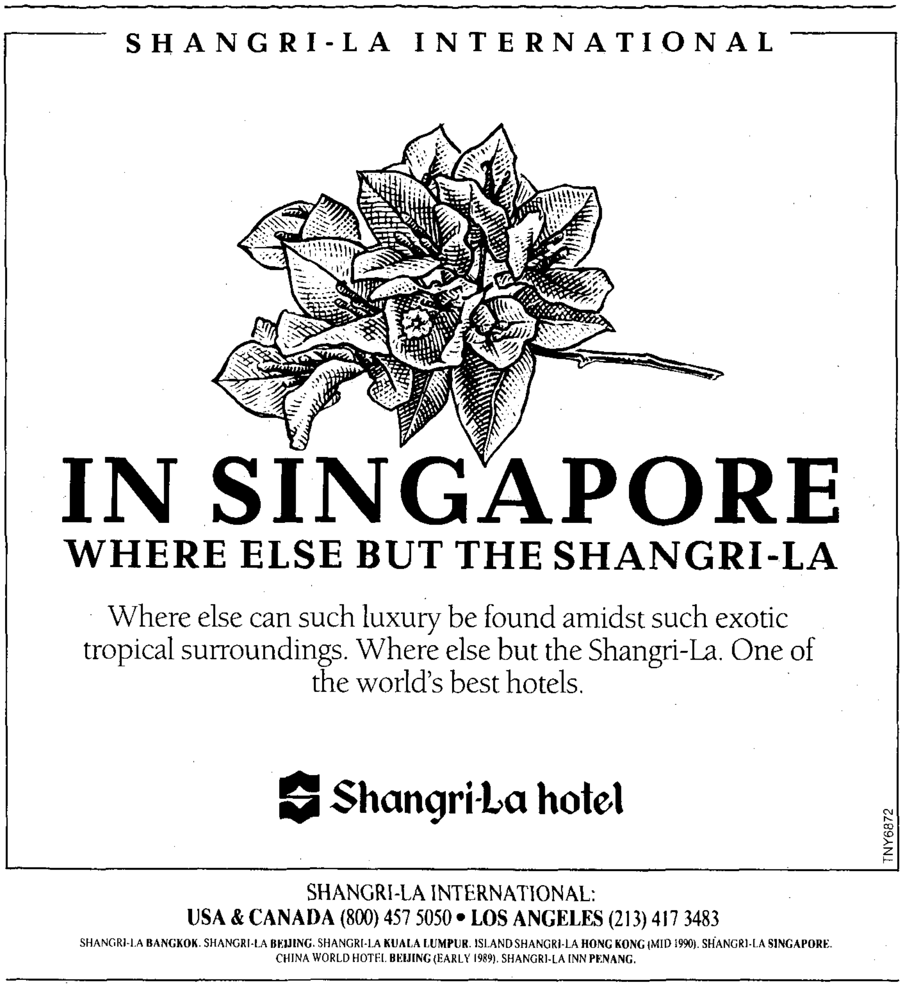

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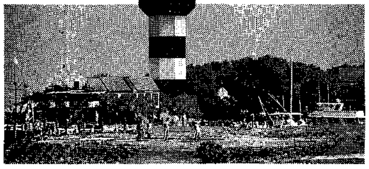

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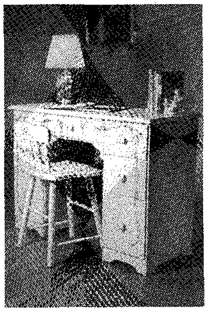

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Bob's office—which was then in Montrose, down beyond Foothill Boulevard.

Soon after the storm, she said, "Scotty woke up one night, and he had a real high temperature. You see, he was sixteen, and he kept hearing the mud and rock hitting the window. He kept thinking it was going to come again. Kim used to go four-wheeling, and cross streams, and she had to get out once, because they got stuck, and when she felt the flow of water and sand on her legs, she said, she could have panicked."

Soon after the storm, the family gathered to make a decision. Were they going to move or were they going to dig out their house and rebuild it? Each of them knew what might have happened. Bob said, "If it had been a frame house, we would be dead down in the basin below."

But it was not a frame house. It was the fort. "The kids said rebuild. So we rebuilt."

As he sat in his new living room telling the story, Bob was dressed in a Pierre Cardin jumper and pants, and Jackie was beside him in a pale-pink jumpsuit by Saint Germain. The house had a designer look as well, with its railings and balconies and Italianate marbles under the tall dry trees. It appeared to be worth a good deal more than the half-million dollars Bob said it might bring. He had added a second story and put all bedrooms there. The original roof spreads around them like a flaring skirt. He changed a floor-length window in the front hall, filling the lower half of it with cement block.

I asked what other structural changes he had made.

He said, "None."

The Genofiles sued Los Angeles County. They claimed that Upper Shields Debris Basin had not been cleaned out and that the channel below was improperly designed. Los Angeles settled for three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars.

From the local chamber of commerce the family later received the Beautification Award for Best Home. Two of the criteria by which houses are selected for this honor are "good maintenance" and "a sense of drama."

I HAVE not been specific about the dates of the stories so far recounted. This was to create the impression that debris pours forth from the mountains continually, perennially, perpetually—

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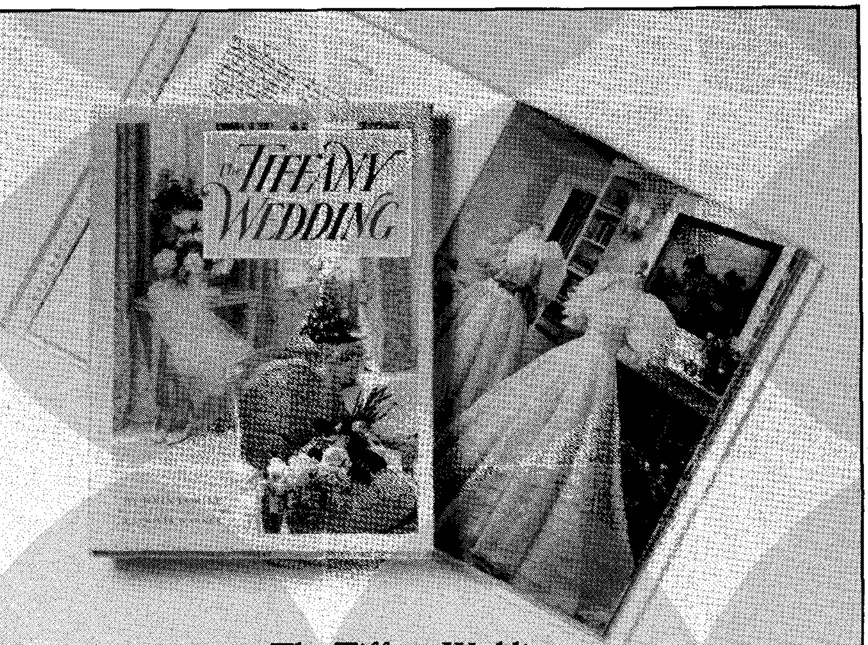
which it does and does not, there being a great temporal disparity between the pace at which the mountains behave and the way people think. Debris flows do not occur in every possible season. When they do happen, they don't just spew from any canyon but come in certain places on the mountain front. The places change. Volumes differ. There are vintage years. The four most prominent in this century have been 1934, 1938, 1969, and 1978. Exceptional flows have occurred at least once a decade, and lesser ones in greater numbers. Exceptional flows are frequent, in other words, but not frequent enough to deter people from building pantiled mansions in the war zone, dingbats in the line of fire.

Why the debris moves when it does or where it does is not attributable to a single agent. The parent rock has been extensively broken up by earthquakes, but that alone will not make it flow. Heavy rainfall, the obvious factor, is not as obvious as it may seem. In 1980, some of the most intense storms ever measured in Los Angeles failed to produce debris flows of more than minimal size. The setting up of a debris flow is a little like the charging of an eighteenth-century muzzle-loader: the ramrod, the powder, the wadding, the shot. Nothing much would happen in the absence of any one component. In sequence and proportion each had to be correct.

On the geologic time scale, debris flows in the San Gabriel Mountains can be looked upon as constant. With all due respect, though, the geologic time scale doesn't mean a whole lot in a place like Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, even the Los Angeles time scale does not arouse general interest. A superevent in 1934? In 1938? In 1969? In 1978? Who is going to remember that? A relatively major outpouring—somewhere in fifty miles—about once every decade? Mountain time and city time appear to be bifocal. Even with a geology functioning at such remarkably short intervals, the people have ample time to forget it.

In February of 1978, while debris was still hardening in the home of the Genofiles, Wade Wells, of the United States Forest Service, went up and down Pine Cone Road knocking on doors asking how long the people had lived there. He wondered who remembered, nine years back, the debris-flow inundations of Glendora and Azusa,



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scarcely twenty miles away. Only two did. Everyone else had arrived since 1969.

Wells is a hydrologist who works in the mountains, principally in San Dimas Experimental Forest, where he does research on erosion and sedimentation—the story of assembling debris. With a specialist's eye, he notes the mountain front, and in its passivity can see the tension: "These guys here, they should be nervous when it rains. Their houses are living on borrowed time. See that dry ledge? It's a waterfall. I've seen hundreds of tons of rock falling over it." More often, though, he is thousands of feet above the nearest house, on slopes so steep he sometimes tumbles and rolls. With his colleagues, he performs experiments with plants, rock, water, fire. When I first became interested in Los Angeles' battle with debris flows, I went up there with them a number of times. The mountains, after all, are where the rocks come from. The mountains shape the charge that will advance upon the city. People come from odder places than the East Coast to see this situation. One day, a couple of scientists arrived from the Cordillera Cantábrica, in northwestern Spain. When they saw how rapidly the San Gabriels were disintegrating, one of them said he felt sorry for Wells, who would soon be out of work. When Wells told him that the mountains were rising even faster than they were coming down, the man said, "*Muy interesante. Sí, señor.*"

From below, one look at the San Gabriels will suggest their advantage. The look is sometimes hard to come by. You might be driving up the San Gabriel River Freeway in the morning, heading straight at the mountains at point-blank range, and not be able to see them. A voice on KNX tells you that the day is clear. There's not a cloud in the sky, as the blue straight up confirms. A long incline rises into mist, not all of which is smog. From time immemorial, this pocket of the coast has been full of sea fog and persistent vapors. The early Spaniards called it the Bay of Smokes. Smog, the action of sunlight on nitrogen oxides, has only contributed to a preëxisting veil. Sometimes you don't see the San Gabriels until the streets stop and the mountains start. The veil suddenly thins, and there they are, in height and magnitude overwhelming. You plunge into a canyon flanked with soaring slopes before you realize you are out of town. The San Gabriel Mountains are as rugged as any terrain in America, and their extraordinary proximity to the city, the abruptness of the transition from the one milieu to the other, cannot be exaggerated. A lone hiker in the San Gabriels one winter—exhausted, snow-blinded, hypothermic—staggered down a ridgeline out of the snow and directly into the parking lot of a shopping center, where he crawled to a phone booth, called 911, and slumped against the glass until an ambulance came to save him.

Hang-glider pilots go up the San Gabriels, step off crags, and, after a period of time proportional to their skills, land somewhere in the city. The San Gabriels are nearly twice as high as Mt. Katahdin or Mt. Washington, and are much closer to the sea. From base platform to summit, the San Gabriels are three thousand feet higher than the Rockies. To be up in the San Gabriels is to be both above and beside urban Los Angeles, only minutes from the streets, and to look north from ridge to dry ridge above deeply cut valleys filled with gulfs of clear air. Beyond the interior valleys—some fifty thousand feet away and a vertical mile above you—are the summits of Mt. Baldy, Mt. Hawkins, Mt. Baden-Powell. They are so clearly visible in the dry blue sky that just below their ridgelines you can almost count the boulders that are bunched there like grapes.

If you turn and face south, you look out over something like soft slate that reaches fifty miles to an imprecise horizon. The whole of Los Angeles is spread below you, and none of it is visible. It is lost absolutely in the slate-gray sea, grayer than a minesweeper, this climatic wonder, this megalopolitan featherbed a thousand feet thick, known as "the marine layer." Early in the day, it is for the most part the natural sea fog. As you watch it from above through the morning and into the afternoon, it turns yellow, and then ochre, and then brown, and sometimes nearly black—like butter darkening in a skillet.

Judith Shahn

Glancing down at it one day while working on an experiment, Wade Wells said it seemed to have reached the hue of a first-stage smog alert. Wells was helping Edwin Harp, a debris-flow specialist from the United States Geological Survey, collect "undisturbed" samples by hammering plastic tubes into the mountain soil.

"If the soil were nice and compliant, this would be nice and scientific," Harp said, smacking the plastic with a wooden-handled shovel. After a while, he extracted a tube full of uncompliant material, and said, "This isn't soil; it's regolith." Regolith is a stony blanket that lies under soil and over bedrock. It crumbled and was pebbly in the hand.

As they prepared to sink another tube, I said, "What's a first-stage smog alert?"

"Avoid driving, avoid strenuous activity," Wells answered.

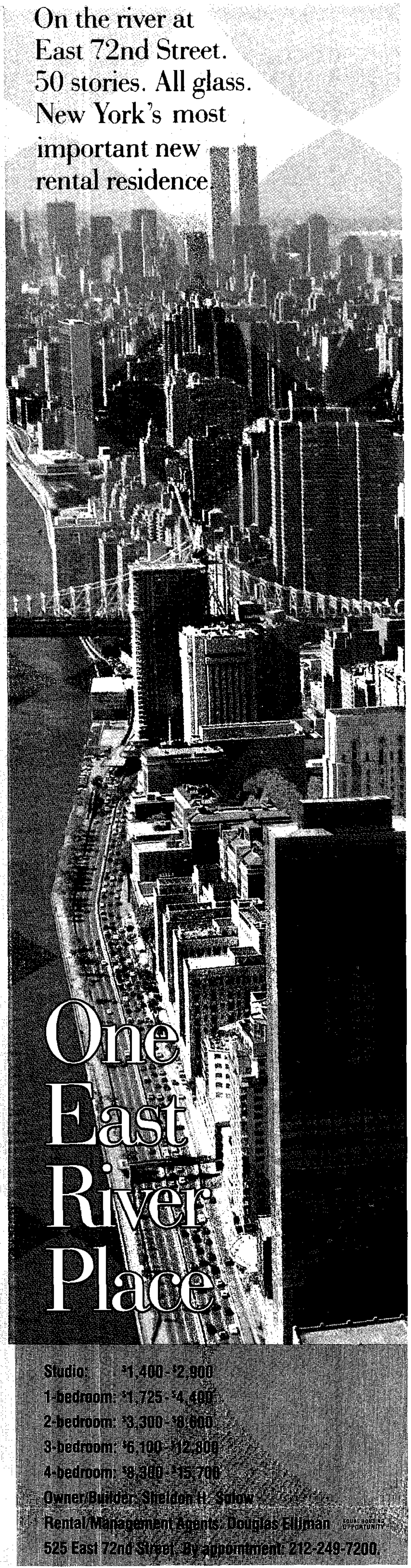
Harp said, "Avoid breathing."

The slope they were sampling had an incline of eighty-five per cent. They were standing, and walking around, but I preferred—just there—to sit. Needle grass went through my trousers. The heads of needle grass detach from the stalks and have the barbed design of arrows. They were going by the quiver into my butt but I still preferred to sit. It was the better posture for writing notes. The San Gabriels are so steep and so extensively dissected by streams that some watersheds are smaller than a hundred acres. The slopes average sixty-five to seventy per cent. In numerous places, they are vertical. The angle of repose—the steepest angle that loose rocks can abide before they start to move, the steepest angle the soil can maintain before it starts to fail—will vary locally according to the mechanics of shape and strength. Many San Gabriel slopes are at the angle of repose or beyond it. The term "oversteepened" is often used to describe them. At the giddy extreme of oversteepening is the angle of maximum slope. Very large sections of the San Gabriels closely approach that angle. In such terrain, there is not much to hold the loose material except the plants that grow there.

Evergreen oaks were fingering up the creases in the mountainsides, pointing toward the ridgeline forests of bigcone Douglas fir, of knobcone and Coulter pine. The forests had an odd sort of timberline. They went down to it rather than up. Down from the ridges the conifers descended through nine thousand, seven thousand, six thousand feet, stopping roughly at five. The forests abruptly ended—the country below being too dry in summer to sustain tall trees. On down the slopes and all the way to the canyons was a thicket of varied shrubs that changed in character as altitude fell but was everywhere dense enough to stop an army. On its lower levels, it was all green, white, and yellow with buckwheat, burroweed, lotus and sage, deerweed, bindweed, yerba santa. There were wild morning glories, Canterbury bells, tree tobacco, miner's lettuce. The thicket's resistance to trespass, while everywhere formidable, stiffened considerably as it evolved upward. There were intertwining mixtures of manzanita, California lilac, scrub oak, chamise. There was buckthorn. There was mountain mahogany. Generally evergreen, the dark slopes were splashed here and there with dodder, its mustard color deepening to rust. Blossoms of the Spanish bayonet stood up like yellow flames. There were lemonade berries (relatives of poison ivy and poison oak). In canyons, there were alders, big-leaf-maple bushes, pug sycamores, and California bay. Whatever and wherever they were, these plants were prickly, thick, and dry, and a good deal tougher than tundra. Those evergreen oaks fingering up the creases in the mountains were known to the Spaniards as chaparros. Riders who worked in the related landscape wore leather overalls open at the back, and called them chaparajos. By extension, this all but impenetrable brush was known as chaparral.

The low stuff, at the buckwheat level, is often called soft chaparral. Up in the tough chamise, closer to the lofty timber, is high chaparral, which is also called hard chaparral. High or low—hard, soft, or mixed—all chaparral has in common an always developing, relentlessly intensifying, vital necessity to burst into flame. In a sense, chaparral consumes fire no less than fire consumes chaparral. Fire nourishes and rejuvenates the plants. There are seeds that fall into the soil, stay there indefinitely, and will not germinate except in the aftermath of fire. There are basal buds that sprout only after fire. Droughts are so long, rains so brief, that dead bits of wood and leaves scarcely decay. Instead, they accumulate, thicken, until the plant community is all but strangling in its own duff. The nutrients in the dead material are being withheld from the soil. When fire comes, it puts the nutrients back in the ground. It clears the terrain for fresh growth. When chaparral has not been burned for thirty years, about half the thicket will be dry dead stuff—twenty-five thousand tons of it in one square mile. The living plants are no less flammable. The chamise, the manzanita—in fact, most chaparral plants—are full of solvent extractives that burn intensely and ignite easily. Their leaves are glossy with oils and resins that seal in moisture during hot dry periods and serve the dual purpose of responding explosively to flame. In the long dry season, and particularly in the fall, air flows southwest toward Los Angeles from the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range. Extremely low in moisture, it comes out of the canyon lands and crosses the Mojave Desert. As it drops in altitude, it compresses, becoming even dryer and hotter. It advances in gusts. This is the wind that is sometimes called the foehn. The fire wind. The devil wind. In Los Angeles, it is known as Santa Ana. When chamise and other chaparral plants sense the presence of Santa Ana winds, their level of moisture drops, and they become even more flammable than they were before. The Santa Anas bring what has been described as "instant critical fire weather." Temperatures rise above a hundred degrees. Humidity drops very close to zero. According to Charles Colver, of the United States Forest Service, "moisture evaporates off your eyeballs so fast you have to keep blinking."

Ignitions are for the most part caused by people—through accident or arson. Ten per cent are lightning. Where the Santa Anas collide with local mountain winds, they become so erratic that they can scatter a fire in big flying brands for a long distance in any direction. The frequency and the intensity of the forest fires in the Southern California chaparral are the great-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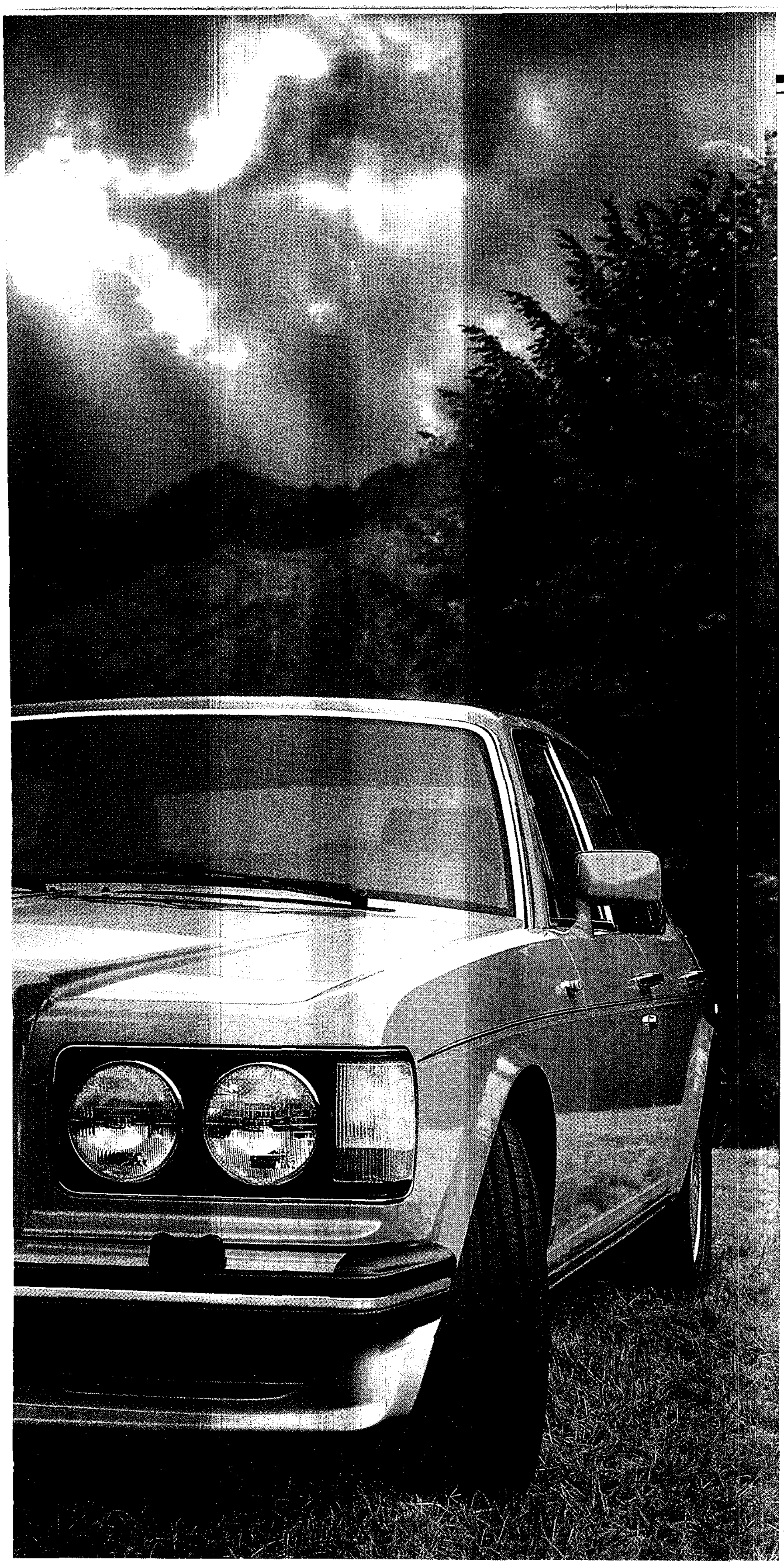

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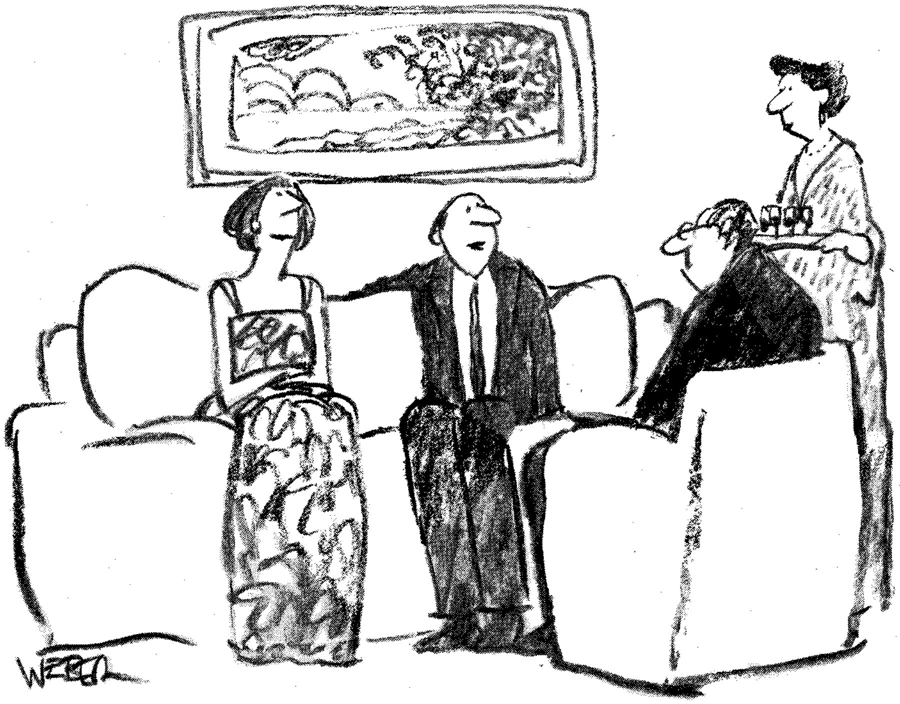


"Mary Jo is a dyed-in-the-wool feminist. Me, too, of course."

• •

est in the United States, with the possible exception of the wildfires of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. The chaparral fires are considerably more potent than the forest fires Wade Wells saw when he was an undergraduate at the University of Idaho or when he worked as a firefighter in the Pacific Northwest. "Fires in the Pacific Northwest are nothing compared with these chaparral fires," he remarked. "Chaparral fires are almost vicious by comparison. They're so intense. Chaparral is one of the most flammable vegetation complexes there are."

It burns as if it were soaked with gasoline. Chaparral plants typically have multiple stems emerging from a single root crown, and this contributes not only to the density of the thickets but, ultimately, to the surface area of combustible material that stands prepared for flame. Hundreds of acres can be burned clean in minutes. In thick black smoke there is wild orange flame, rising through the canyons like explosion crowns. The canyons serve as chimneys, and in minutes whole mountains are aflame, resembling volcanoes, emitting high columns of fire and smoke. The smoke can rise twenty thousand feet. A force of two thousand people may fight the fire, plus dozens of machines, including squadrons in the air. But Santa Ana firestorms are so violent that they are really beyond all effort at control. From the edge of the city upward, sixteen miles of mountain front have burned to the ridgeline in a single day.

So momentous are these conflagrations that they are long remembered by name: the Canyon Inn Fire, August, 1968, nineteen thousand acres above Arby's by Foothill Boulevard, above the world's foremost container nursery, above the chief executive officer of Mackinac Island Fudge; the Village Fire and the Mill Fire, November, 1975, sixty-five thousand acres above Sunland, Tujunga, La Crescenta, La Cañada. The Mill Fire, in the words of a foreman at Flood, "burnt the whole front face off."

It is not a great rarity to pick up the Los Angeles *Times* and see a headline like this one, from September 27, 1970:

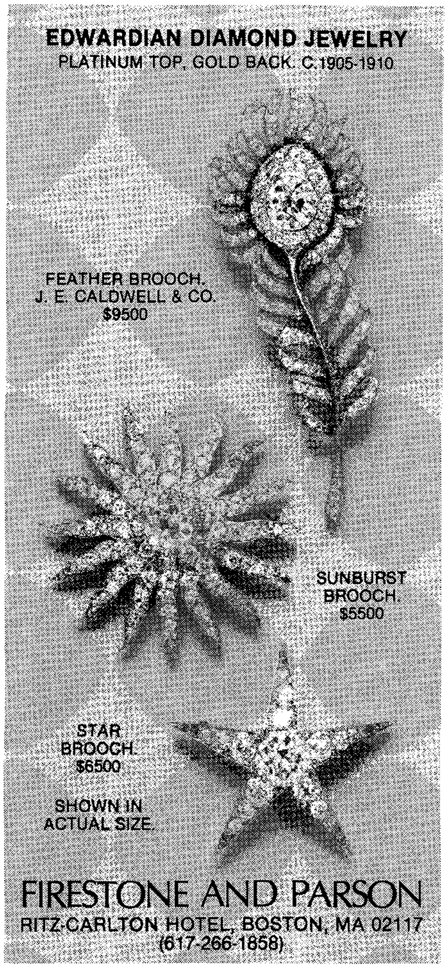
14 MAJOR FIRES RAGE OUT OF
CONTROL
256 Homes Destroyed as
Flames Burn 180,000 Acres

In millennia before Los Angeles settled its plain, the chaparral burned every thirty years or so, as the chaparral does now. The burns of prehistory, in their natural mosaic, were smaller than the ones today. With cleared fire lanes, chemical retardants, and other means of suppressing what is not beyond control, people have conserved fuel in large acreages. When the inevitable fires come, they burn hotter, higher, faster than they ever did in a state of unhindered nature. When the fires end, there is nothing much left on the mountainsides but a thin blanket of ash. The burns are vast and bare. On the sheer declivities where the surface soils were held by chaparral, there is no chaparral.

Fine material tumbles downslope and collects in the waterless beds of streams. It forms large and bulky cones there, to some extent filling the canyons. Under green chaparral, the gravitational movement of bits of soil, particles of sand, and other loose debris goes on month after month, year after year, especially in oversteepened environments, where it can represent more than half of all erosion. After a burn, though, it increases exponentially. It may increase twentyfold, fortyfold, even sixtyfold. This steady tumbling descent of unconsolidated mountain crumbs is known as dry ravel. After a burn, so much dry ravel and other debris becomes piled up and ready to go that to live under one of those canyons is (as many have said) to look up the barrel of a gun.

One would imagine that the first rain would set the whole thing off, but it doesn't. The early-winter rains—and sometimes the rains of a whole season—are not enough to make the great bulk move. Actually, they add to it.

If you walk in a rainstorm on a freshly burned chaparral slope, you notice as you step on the wet ground that the tracks you are making are prints of dry dust. In the course of a conflagration, chaparral soil, which is not much for soaking up water in the first place, experiences a chemical change and, a little below its surface, becomes waterproof. In a Forest Service building at the foot of the mountains Wade Wells keeps some petri dishes and soil samples in order to demonstrate this phenomenon to passing unbelievers. In one dish he puts unburned chaparral soil. It is golden brown. He drips water on it from an eyedropper. The water beads up, stands there for a while, then collapses and spreads into the soil. Why the water hesitates is not well understood but is a great deal more credible than what happens next. Wells fills a dish with a dark soil from burned



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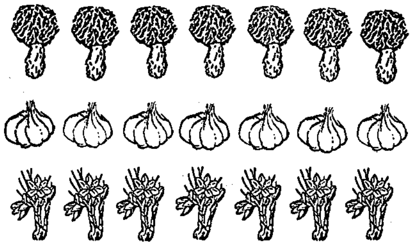

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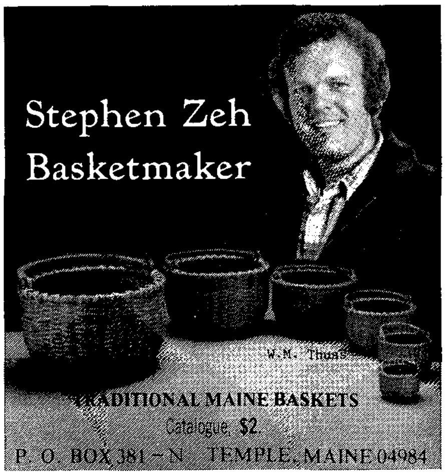

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chaparral. He fills the eyedropper and empties it onto the soil. The water stands up in one large dome. Five minutes later, the dome is still there. Ten minutes later, the dome is still there. Sparkling, tumescent, mycophane, the big bead of water just stands there indefinitely, on top of the impermeable soil. Further demonstrating how waterproof this burned soil really is, Wells pours half a pound of it, like loose brown sugar, into a beaker of water. The soil instantly forms a homuncular blob—integral, immiscible—suspended in the water.

In the slow progression of normal decay, chaparral litter seems to give up to the soil what have been vaguely described as "waxlike complexes of long-chain aliphatic hydrocarbons." These waxy substances are what make unburned chaparral soil somewhat resistant to water, or "slightly nonwettable," as Wells and his colleagues are wont to describe it. When the wildfires burn, and temperatures at the surface of the ground are six or seven hundred centigrade degrees, the soil is so effective as an insulator that the temperature one centimetre below the surface may not be hot enough to boil water. The heavy waxlike substances vaporize at the surface and recondense in the cooler temperatures below. Acting like oil, they coat soil particles and establish the hydrophobic layer—one to six centimetres down. Above that layer, where the waxlike substances are gone, the veneer of burned soil is "wettable." When Wells drips water on a dishful of that, the water soaks in as if the dish were full of Kleenex. When rain falls on burned and denuded ground, it soaks the very thin upper layer but can penetrate no farther. Hiking boots strike hard enough to break through into the dust, but the rain is repelled and goes down the slope. Of all the assembling factors that eventually send debris flows rumbling down the canyons, none is more detonative than the waterproof soil.

In the first rains after a fire, water quickly saturates the thin permeable layer, and liquefied soil drips downhill like runs of excess paint. These miniature debris flows stripe the mountainsides with miniature streambeds—countless scarlike rills that are soon the predominant characteristic of the burned terrain. As more rain comes, each rill is going to deliver a little more debris to the accumulating load in the

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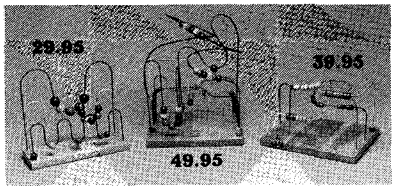

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canyon below. But, more to the point, each rill—its natural levees framing its impermeable bed—will increase the speed of the surface water. As rain sheds off a mountainside like water off a tin roof, the rill network, as it is called, may actually cube the speed, and therefore the power, of the runoff. The transport capacity of the watershed—how much bulk it can move—may increase a thousandfold. The rill network is prepared to deliver water with enough force and volume to mobilize the deposits lying in the canyons below. With the appearance of the rills, almost all prerequisites have now sequentially occurred. The muzzle-loader is charged. For a full-scale flat-out debris flow to burst forth from the mountains, the final requirement is a special-intensity storm.

Some of the most concentrated rainfall in the history of the United States has occurred in the San Gabriel Mountains. The oddity of this is about as intense as the rain. Months—seasons—go by in Los Angeles without a fallen drop. Los Angeles is one of the least-rained-upon places in the Western Hemisphere. The mountains are so dry they hum. Erosion by dry ravel greatly exceeds erosion by water. The celebrated Mediterranean climate of Los Angeles owes itself to aridity. While Seattle is receiving its average rainfall of thirty-nine inches a year, Chicago thirty-three, the District of Columbia thirty-nine, and New York City forty-four, Los Angeles is doing well if it gets fifteen. In one year out of every four over the past century, rainfall in Los Angeles has been under ten inches, and once or twice it was around five. That is pure Gobi. When certain storm systems approach Los Angeles, though—storms that come in on a very long reach from far out in the Pacific—they will pick up huge quantities of water from the ocean and just pump it into the mountains. These are by no means annual events, but when they occur they will stir even hydrologists to bandy the name of Noah. In January, 1969, for example, more rain than New York City sees in a year fell in the San Gabriels in nine days. In January, 1943, twenty-six inches fell in twenty-four hours. In February, 1978, just before the Genofiles' house filled with debris, nearly an inch and a half of rain fell in twenty-five minutes. On April 5, 1926, a rain gauge in the San Gabri-

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The really big events result from two, three, four, five storms in a row coming in off the Pacific. In 1980, there were six storms in nine days. Mystically, unnervingly, the heaviest downpours always occur on the watersheds most recently burned. Why this is so is a question that has not been answered. Meteorologists and hydrologists speculate about ash-particle nuclei and heat reflection, but they don't know. The storm cells are extremely compact, deluging typically about ten miles by ten. One inch of rain on a patch that size is seven million two hundred and thirty-two thousand tons of water. In most years, in most places, a winter rain will actually stabilize a mountainside. The water's surface tension helps to hold the slope together. Where there is antecedent fire, water that would otherwise become a binding force hits the rill network, caroms off the soil's waterproof layer, and rides the steep slopes in cataracts into the nearest canyon. It is now a lubricant, its binding properties repelled, its volume concentrating into great hydraulic power. The vintage years present themselves when at least five days of rain put seven inches on the country and immediately thereafter comes the heaviest rainfall of the series. That is when the flint hits the steel, when the sparks fly into the flashpan. On that day, the debris mobilizes.

FIVE miles into the mountains from the edge of the city is a small, obscure, steep-sided watershed of twenty-five hundred acres which is drained by the Middle Fork of Mill Creek, a tributary of the Big Tujunga. The place is so still you can hear the dry ravel. From time to time, you hear the dry cough of semi-automatic weapons. It is the sound of city folk pursuing a hobby. Recreational marksmanship is permitted on the Middle Fork. There are eight million people just down the wash, and they shoot some interesting guns. Amos Lewis, who covered the region as a deputy sheriff for twenty-five years, once found beside the Angeles Crest Highway "a gun you could hide behind your tie—you'd think it was a tie clip." He has also seen enough muzzle-loaders to have made a difference in the Battle of Long Island. In an imaginative, life-loving city, there will always be people with a need to fire antique weapons. On July 24, 1977, a marksman on the Middle Fork rammed Kleenex down his barrel instead of cloth wadding. Under the Kleenex was black powder. In black powder there is more of an incendiary risk than there is in the smokeless kind. When the rifle fired, flaming Kleenex shot out the muzzle and burned down three thousand eight hundred and sixty acres, including the entire watershed of the Middle Fork.

It was a textbook situation—a bowl in the mountains filled with hard chaparral that had not been touched by fire in ninety-nine years. The older chaparral becomes, the hotter it burns. In its first ten years of new growth, it is all but incombustible. After twenty years, its renewed flammability curves sharply upward. It burns, usually, before it is forty years old. The hotter the fire, the more likely a debris flow—and the greater the volume when it comes. The century-old fuel of the Middle Fork was so combustible that afterward there were not even stumps. The slopes looked sandpapered. The streambed, already loaded, piled even higher with dry ravel. The Middle Fire, as the burn was known, was cause for particular alarm, because a small settlement was a mile downstream. Its name —Hidden Springs—contained more prophecy than its residents seemed prepared to imagine. Three hundred and ninety thousand cubic yards of loose debris was gathered just above them, awaiting mobilization.

Dan Davis and Hadi Norouzi, L.A.C.F.C.D. engineers, went up there after the burn to tell the people what they might expect. In midsummer, it is not a simple matter to envision a winter flood if you are leaning on a boulder by a desiccated creek. "We spent a lot of time trying to prevent a disaster from occurring," Davis said recently. "The fact that people would not believe what *could* happen was disappointing, actually. We held meetings. We said, 'There's nothing we can do for you. Telephones are going to go out. Mud will close the road. You're abandoned. If you're here, get to high ground.' " There was no debris basin, of course. This was a hamlet in the mountains, not a subdivision at the front. Conditions were elemental and pristine. "We walked people through escape routes," he went on. "We told them the story of fire and rain. We said, 'If heavy rain

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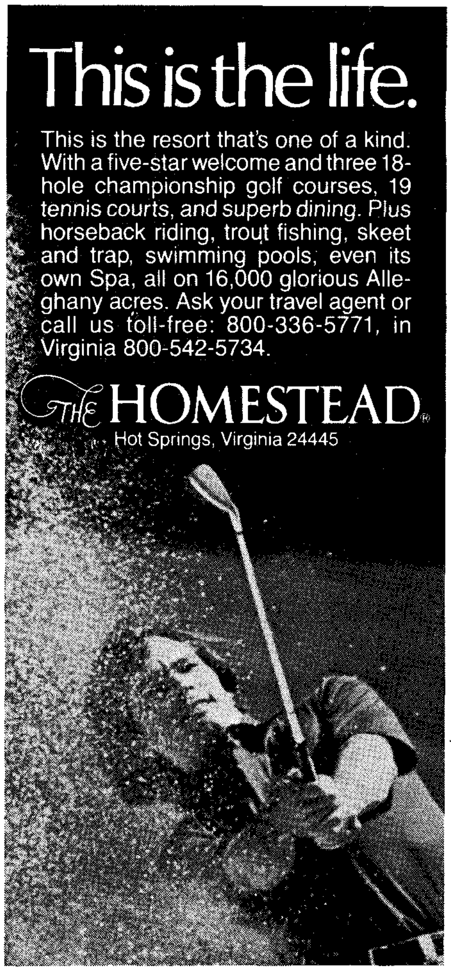

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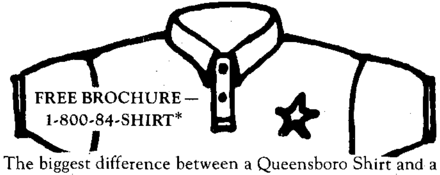

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Norouzi told them they were so heavily threatened that no amount of sandbags, barricades, or deflection walls was ever going to help them. "There is nothing you can build that will protect you."

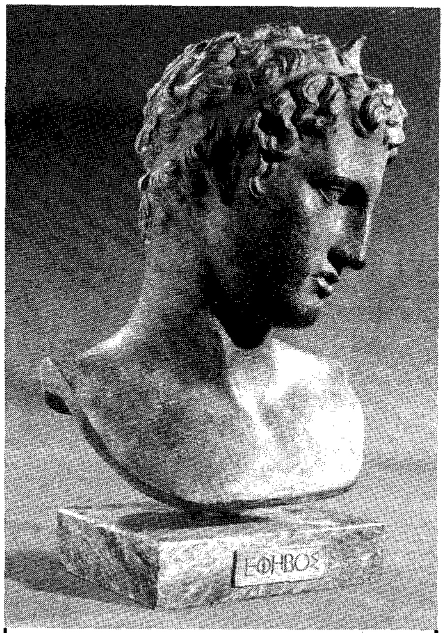
Half a year went by, and nothing stirred. Cal Drake went on making jewelry in his streamside apartment. He and his wife, Mary, shared a one-story triplex with two other couples. The Drakes, from the city, had moved to Hidden Springs two years before, in quest of a "quiet life." Elva Lewis, wife of Amos the sheriff, went on running her roadside café. Gabe Hinterberg stayed open for business at the Hidden Springs Lodge. In December and January, there was an unusual amount of rain, but no flood. By the end of the first week of February, there had been eighteen inches in all. Then, in the next three days, came enough additional rain to make this the winter of the greatest rainfall of the twentieth century, exceeded only by 1884 and 1890 in the records of Los Angeles County. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration selected the word "monstrous" to befit the culminating February storm, in which almost a foot of rain fell in twenty-four hours, and, in the greatest all-out burst, an inch and a half in five minutes. This was the storm that sent the debris down Pine Cone Road, overtopped the Zachau Basin, mobilized the corpses in the Verdugo Hills. In the small valley of the Middle Fork, upon the scorched impenetrable ground, three million tons of water fell in one day.

Toward midnight February 9th, an accidental fire broke out in a small building of Gabe Hinterberg's. A fire truck eventually came. Half a dozen people fought the fire, assisted by the heavy rain. One of them was George Scribner. The five-minute spike of greatest downpour occurred at about one-thirty. Half an hour later, George said, "Hey, we got the fire put out."

Gabe said, "Good deal."

And then Gabe and George were dead.

Amos Lewis, nearby, was holding a fire hose in his hand and was attempting to prevent it from kinking. In his concentration, he did not see danger coming. He heard nothing ominous. He only felt the hose draw taut.



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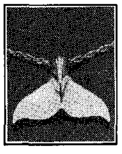

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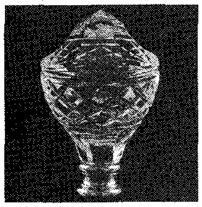

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Through his peripheral vision he became aware that the fire truck—with the hose connected to it—was somehow moving sideways. Seconds later, Amos Lewis, too, was swept away.

The snout of the debris flow was twenty feet high, tapering behind. Debris flows sometimes ooze along, and sometimes move as fast as the fastest river rapids. The huge dark snout was moving nearly five hundred feet a minute and the rest of the flow behind was coming twice as fast, making roll waves as it piled forward against itself—this great slug, as geologists would describe it, this discrete slug, this heaving violence of wet cement. Already included in the debris were propane tanks, outbuildings, picnic tables, canyon live oaks, alders, sycamores, cottonwoods, a Lincoln Continental, an Oldsmobile, and countless boulders five feet thick. All this was spread wide a couple of hundred feet, and as the debris flow went through Hidden Springs it tore out more trees, picked up house trailers and more cars and more boulders, and knocked Gabe Hinterberg's lodge completely off its foundation. Mary and Cal Drake were standing in their living room when a wall came off. "We got outside somehow," he said later. "I just got away. She was trying to follow me. Evidently, her feet slipped out from under her. She slid right down into the main channel." The family next door were picked up and pushed against their own ceiling. Two were carried away. Whole houses were torn loose with people inside them. A house was ripped in half. A bridge was obliterated. A large part of town was carried a mile downstream and buried in the reservoir behind Big Tujunga Dam. Thirteen people were part of the debris. Most of the bodies were never found.

As Amos Lewis suddenly found himself struggling in the viscous flow, he more or less bumped into a whirling pickup, coming down in the debris from who knows where upstream. One of the roll waves picked him up and threw him into the back of the truck. As the vehicle spun around and around, it neared one bank. Lewis saw an overhanging limb. He reached for it, caught it, and pulled himself above the rocky flow. Years later, just about where this had happened, he told Wade Wells and me the story. "I got pushed to one side," he said as he finished. "I lucked out." Lewis is a

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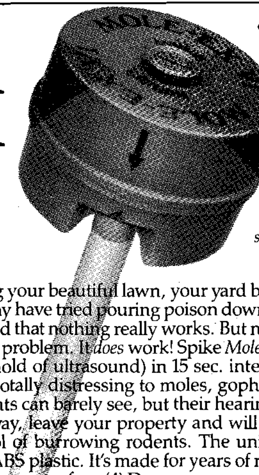

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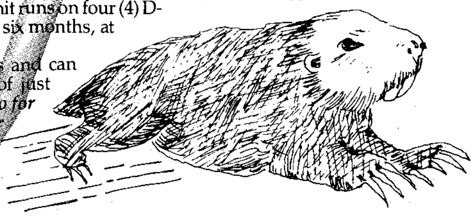

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prematurely white-haired man with a white beard and dark-brown eyes. On this day in late spring, his muscular build and deeply tanned skin were amply displayed by a general absence of clothing. He wore bluejean shorts, white socks, mountain boots, and nothing else. When people began to discover human remains in the reservoir, he had gone in his patrol car to investigate the fate of his neighbors. "I had to go roll on them calls," he said. "A deputy sheriff has to roll on any type of body being found. I carried out at least four, maybe five, skulls."

The thirteen people who died in Hidden Springs were roughly a third of the year-round community; there was a much larger summer population. The main house of Lutherglen, a resort-retreat of the First English Evangelical Lutheran Church, remained standing but in ruins. Houses that stayed put were gouged out like peppers and stuffed with rocks. Lewis gestured across the canyon—across foundations with no houses on them, bolts sticking up out of cinder blocks where sills had been ripped away—toward some skeletal frames made of two-by-fours. "They used to be trailer stalls," he said. "The people left their cars by the river and walked up the bank to the trailers. The cars ended up in the dam." The First English Evangelical Lutherans sued the Los Angeles County Flood Control District for twenty million dollars. The judge threw the case out of court—followed, moments later, by the collection plate. Since the act in question was God's, the defendant might as well have been the plaintiff, and the Plaintiff the target of the suit.

I remarked to Lewis, who is now retired as sheriff, that I thought I'd heard a machine gun earlier in the day. "I worked the canyon car here for twenty-five years," he said. "I probably rolled on a minimum of a hundred and fifty calls where people said they heard machine guns. I never saw a machine gun."

Wells was attentive to this remark, raising his eyes with interest. Behind his mild ecological look—his tortoiseshell glasses, his amiable scientific manner—lay a colonel's affection for ordnance. At the time, in the Reserve, he was a lieutenant colonel and rising. He'd been on active duty seven years, two in Vietnam. He told me one day that if California were to secede from the United States it would be one of the richest countries in the world and, with its present units of the National Guard, be among the best defended. "You can take a file and in fifteen minutes make an automatic weapon out of an M1," he said to Amos Lewis. "It can sound like a machine gun."

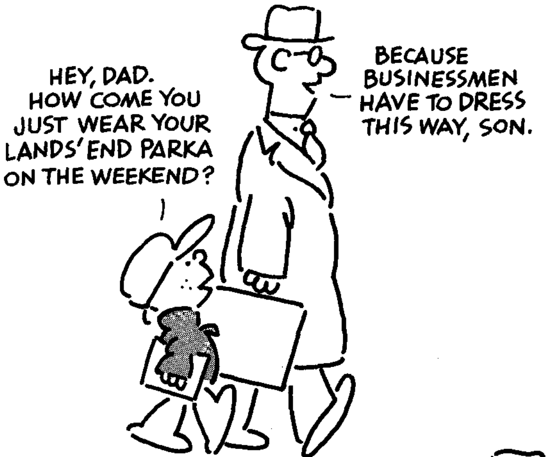
This set off a long and highly technical discussion between the scholarly hydrologist and the shirtless mountaineer, each slipping into a second self against a backdrop of huge boulders that had been somewhere else a short time before and had been delivered by a force that was high in the kiloton range. Most of the mud, sand, and rock had gone into the Big Tujunga, behind the dam, and the county had spent more than two million dollars taking it out. The debris that had stayed in the valley closely resembled glacial debris—chaotic, unsorted till, a round-rock mélange. Far up the hillsides framing the valley, some of it clung like bits of plaster stuck to an old wall, thus recording the high edges of the discrete slug, where six hundred thousand tons went by.

WHEN you walk in the stream valleys of the San Gabriels, you will see rocks the size of heads wedged among the branches of trees. In a small tight valley called Trail Canyon, I saw two boulders that were a good deal wider than the bed of the brook that had carried and rounded them. They were bigger than school buses. Surrounded by lesser debris, they had moved a long distance in its company. At a guess—from their dimensions and specific gravity—the aggregate weight of the two rocks was a hundred and sixty tons.

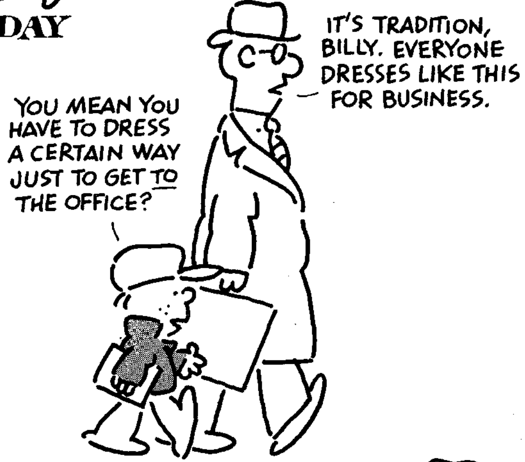
In February, 1978, a boulder weighing three hundred and fifteen tons ended up on a residential street about a third of a mile inside the Los Angeles city limits. Through some neighborhoods, boulders in great numbers advance like Chinese checkers. People pile them up against fences, use them in retaining walls. When Dan Davis was working for Flood, he found debris—on an urban thoroughfare after a storm—a mile and a half from the nearest debris basin. ("When I saw that, I knew we had a real problem.") In 1938, a restaurant on the main street of Sierra Madre was destroyed by invading boulders. Two-foot boulders rumbled through Claremont, coming to a stop three miles from the mountain front. Five miles from the front you can see boulders a foot in diameter. If you ask people how the rocks got there, they assume it was by a process that is no longer functioning. If you suggest that the rocks may have come from the mountains, people say, "No way." Off the eastern end of the San Gabriels, rocks the size of soccer balls are eight miles south of the front.

Building stones in places like Glendora and Covina were delivered by streams from high in the mountains. The stream-rounded rock is more vulnerable to earthquake than bricks would be, but bricks are not shipped F.O.B. by God, and in a land of kaleidoscopic risks what is one more if the rocks are free? Mike Rubel's castle, in Glendora, is made of stream-rounded debris in sizes approximating cannonballs. Dunsinane was not much larger than this suburban home. The ground level of Rubel's castle is twenty-two thousand square feet. From its battlements rise towers sixty-seven feet high and seventy-four feet high, built with San Gabriel boulders and store-bought cement. There are six towers, four set in the walls and two in the courtyard freestanding. Bees live in the Bee Tower, and emerge through archery slits. All around the walls, muzzles of cannons protrude from crenels that are lined with shark-fin glass.

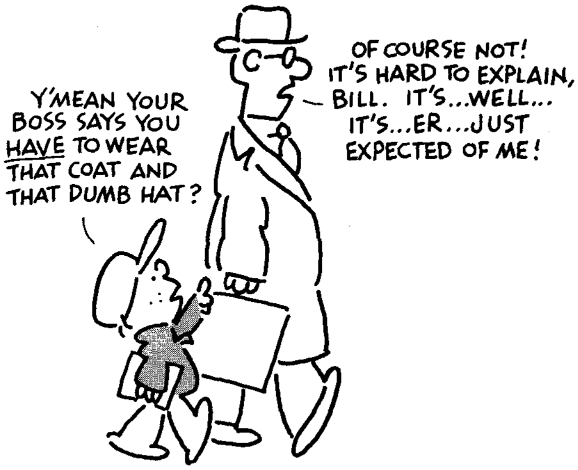
The intensity of the electronic surveillance is high, but the owner is not unfriendly. He likes to sit on a balcony above the courtyard, looking out over his walls and through the crowns of palms at the ridgeline of the mountains. He is a large man to the point of private tailoring. He began his castle in 1959 and completed it in 1985. When he had been working on the project ten years, he took an unexpected delivery of building materials in the form of a


HEY, DAD. HOW COME YOU JUST WEAR YOUR LANDS' END PARKA ON THE WEEKEND?
BECAUSE BUSINESSMEN HAVE TO DRESS THIS WAY, SON.

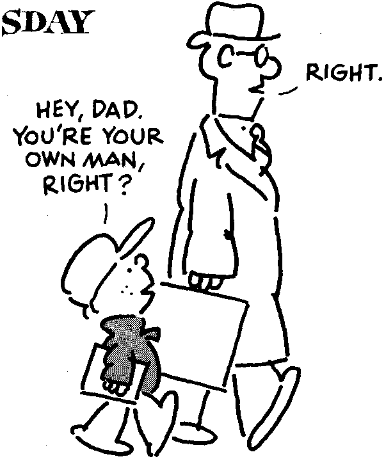
MONDAY


YOU MEAN YOU HAVE TO DRESS A CERTAIN WAY JUST TO GET TO THE OFFICE?
IT'S TRADITION, BILLY. EVERYONE DRESSES LIKE THIS FOR BUSINESS.

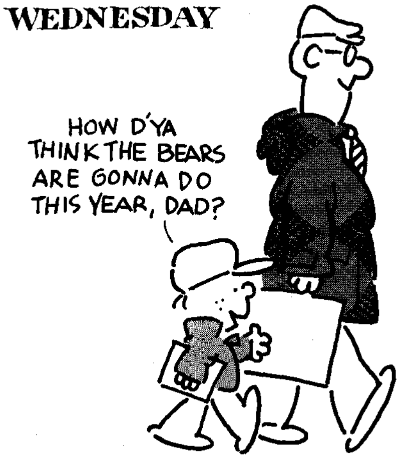
TUESDAY


Y'MEAN YOUR BOSS SAYS YOU HAVE TO WEAR THAT COAT AND THAT DUMB HAT?
OF COURSE NOT! IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BILL. IT'S...WELL... IT'S...ER...JUST EXPECTED OF ME!

WEDNESDAY


HEY, DAD. YOU'RE YOUR OWN MAN, RIGHT?
RIGHT.

THURSDAY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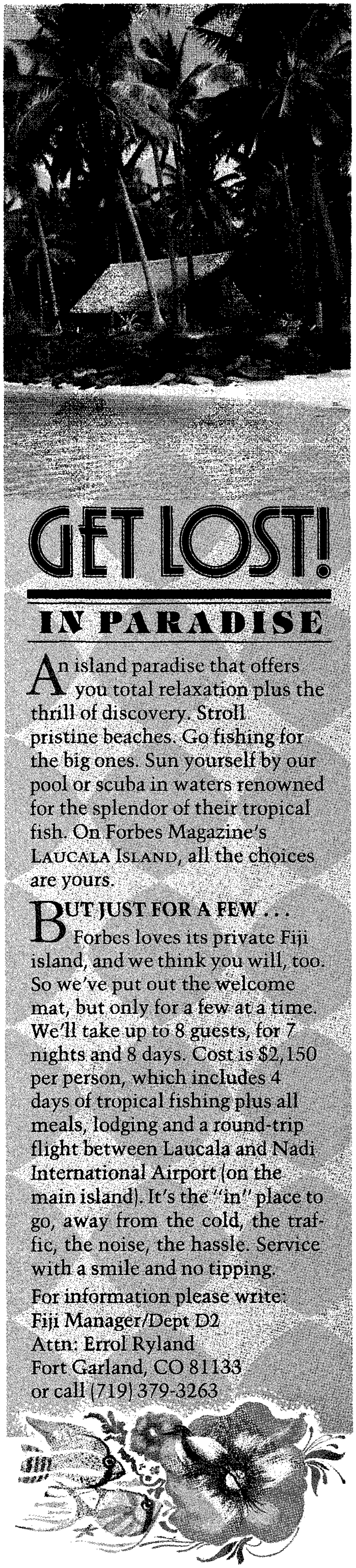

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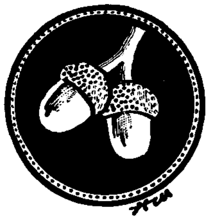
debris slug that breached his defenses, untimbered his portcullises, and got into the inner bailey.

"The ground was shaking just like an earthquake. In the washes, the water was going three billion miles an hour. You could hear the boulders rumbling. It was marvellous."

As a result, there is now a twelve-foot curtain wall on the periphery of the castle. Rubel calls his domain, which is surrounded by commoner houses on a most conventional street, the Kingdom of Rubelia. Numerous crafts are practiced there, and he has a hand-set-printing operation called the Pharm Press. In the Kingdom of Rubelia, F is Ph and Ph is F. There are hand-cranked phorges in the blacksmith phoundry. There are potters' wheels, looms, and lathes.



Sitting beside him on his balcony and dreamily looking at the mountain peaks, I said, "The castle is obviously the result of something."

Rubel said, "Yes. A genetic defect."

Rubel explained that he had built the castle with the help of numerous friends—friends from his days in Citrus High School, friends from his briefer days at Cal Poly. "We were twenty-year-old kids," he said. "And we were flunking out of school. We said, 'If we can't amount to anything, we might as well build a castle.' "

Prince Philip of Great Britain, who is not a Rubelian and gets no F, has made two visits to Rubel's castle.

Cal Poly—the California State Polytechnic University—is not to be confused with Caltech. I bring this up because I went to Caltech one day and, in a very impromptu manner, asked to see a geologist. Any geologist. It had not been my purpose, in pursuing the present theme, to get into the deep geology. I meant to roam the mountains and the mountain front with foresters and engineers, to talk to people living on the urban edge, to interview people who sell the edge—a foreign correspondent covering the battle from behind both lines. But not beneath them. This was a planned vacation from projects in geology—the continuation of a holiday that had begun with stream capture in the lower Mississippi and had spread forth into such innocent milieus as eruptions in Iceland and flowing red lava in Hawaii. Now, in Los Angeles, I had been avoiding geologists in the way that one tries to avoid visits to medical doctors. All had gone well for a matter of weeks, but then, one morning, I just happened to be in Pasadena looking up into the veiled chimeric mountains, and severe symptoms began to develop. Right off the street—in much the way that a needful patient would seek out a Doc-in-the-Box—I walked into the geology department of the California Institute of Technology, found the departmental office, and asked for professional help.

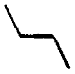
After a short wait, spent leafing through a magazine, I was shown into the office of Leon Silver, whom I knew only by reputation—an isotope geologist whose exacting contributions to geochronology have not repressed his interest in crustal settings, global tectonics, the Big Picture. An ebullient man, husky, in his sixties, he spread out the local sheets from the geologic map of California for a brief rehearsal of the rocks and faults before leading me to the roof of the building, where he continued his diagnosis in the panoramic presence of the rock itself. The roof was flat, a deck. Funnel vents and other apparatus gave the impression that the Caltech geology department was a cruise ship in the lee of seventy miles of mountains.

The institution as a whole, in its remarkable beauty and surprisingly compact size, is sort of a bonsai university—with pools, rialtos, inclined gardens—above which the mountains seem all the more immense. Silver said that if I was looking for first causes in the matter that concerned me I had come to the right place. "The geology provides the debris," he went on. "The San Gabes are a climber's nightmare. Several people a year die on the incompetent rock."

"Yes," I said. "The rock up there is really rotten."

Silver seemed offended. Drawing himself up, he said, "I beg your pardon, sir. It is not rotten. It is shattered." The region was a tracery of faults, like cracks in ancient paint. The mountains were divided by faults, defined by faults, and framed by them as well: on the near side, the Raymond Fault, the Sierra Madre Fault, the Cucamonga Fault; on the far side, the San Andreas Fault. The rock of the San Gabriels had been battered and broken by the earthquakes on these and related faults. In 1971, Silver had flown over the San Gabes immediately after an earthquake that reached 6.2 on the Richter scale. Like artillery shells randomly exploding, the aftershocks were sending up dust in puffs all over the landscape. Something like that would add quite a bit, he said, "to the debris potential." Some of the rock up there had become so unstable that whole hunks of the terrain were moving like glaciers. One mountaintop was heading south like a cap tipping down on a forehead. Things like that had been going on for so long that the mountains were in many places loaded with debris from ancient landslides—prime material, prepared to flow. "The ultimate origin of the debris flows," he said, "is the continuous tectonic front that has made this one of the steepest mountain fronts in North America and produced a wilderness situation not a hundred metres from people's houses."

The continuous tectonic front is where the North American and Pacific Plates are sliding past each other—where Bakersfield moves toward Mexico City while Burbank heads for Alaska. Between Bakersfield and Burbank lie the San Gabriel Mountains. With the San Bernardino Mountains east of them, they trend east-west, forming a kink in the coastal ranges that come down from San Francisco and go on to Baja California. The kink conforms to a bend in the San Andreas Fault, which runs along the inland base of the mountains. The kink looks like this:

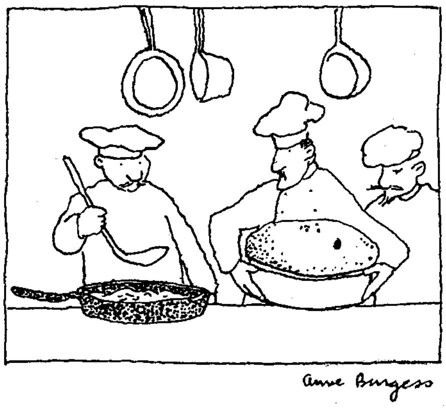


It could be a tiptoeing h. It resembles a prize-winning chair. Los Angeles is like a wad of gum stuck to the bottom of the chair. The mountains are one continuous system, but its segments are variously named. The upper stretch is called the Coast Ranges. The lower leg is called the Peninsular Ranges. The kink is called the Transverse Ranges.

My hieroglyph represents, of course, not only the mountains but the flanking San Andreas Fault, which comes up from the Gulf of California, bends left around Los Angeles, then goes on to San Francisco and north below the sea. As if this regional context were not large enough, Silver now placed it in a larger one. The East Pacific Rise, the ocean-basin spreading center away from which the Pacific Plate and other plates are moving, sinuously makes its way from the latitude of Tierra del Fuego all the way north to Mexico, where it enters the Gulf of California. The East Pacific Rise has splintered Mexico and carried Baja California away from the mainland—much as the Carlsberg Ridge has cracked open the deserts of Afro-Arabia and made the Red Sea. Baja is not moving due west, as one might guess from a glance at a map, but north by northwest, with the rest of the Pacific Plate. The cumulative power of this northward motion presses on the kink in the San Andreas, helping the mountains rise.

That much has long seemed obvious: as the two sides of the San Andreas slide by each other, they compress the landscape at the kink. It has been considerably less obvious that a compressional force accompanies the great fault wherever it goes. Until recently, the building of the Coast Ranges and the Peninsular Ranges has in no way been attributed to the San Andreas Fault. A paper published in *Science* in November, 1987—and signed by enough geologists to make a quorum at the Rose Bowl—offers evidence that the San Andreas has folded its flanking country, much as a moving boat crossing calm waters will send off lateral waves. The great compression at the kink is withal the most intense. The Coast Ranges and the Peninsular Ranges are generally smaller than the Transverse Ranges. The San Gabriels are being compressed about a tenth of an inch a year.

Why the kink is there in the first place is "not well understood." Just to the northeast, though, in the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada, the earth's mantle is close, the earth's crust is thin and stretching. In the past few million years, the geographic coördinates of Reno and Salt Lake—at the western and eastern extremes of the Great Basin—have moved apart sixty miles. This large new subdivision of the regional tectonics is in every way as entrancing as it is enigmatic. Almost all of California may be headed out to sea. Already, the east-west stretching of the Great Basin has put Reno west of Los Angeles, and it may be what has bent the San Andreas Fault.



Some of the rock of the San Gabriels is two hundred times as old as the San Andreas Fault, which has been in existence for less than a five-hundredth of the history of the world. Plates come and go—splitting, welding, changing through time, travelling long distances. Before the present North American and Pacific Plates began to work on this particular rock, Silver said, it may have been "bashed around in Mexico twice and perhaps across the Pacific before that." He continued, "It's a bedrock ridge up there. It's a weirdo wonderful block of rocks, the most complicated mountain range in North America. It includes the oldest rocks on the West Coast. The San Gabes look like a flake kicked around on plate boundaries for hundreds of millions of years."

The Santa Monica Mountains, a sort of footnote to the big contiguous ranges, stood off to the southwest of us, discrete and small. Like any number of lesser hills freestanding in the region, they were flexures of the San Andreas system. Oil people had found pay in the traps formed by such flexures. The Santa Monica Mountains were as shattered as the San Gabes. The several debris basins in the Santa Monicas had worked with varying success. People had died in their beds there, buried alive by debris.

The San Gabriels were rising faster than they were disintegrating, Silver said. The debris basins had given geomorphologists an unparalleled opportunity to calculate erosion rates. They could even determine how much mountain is removed by a single storm. On the average, about seven tons disappears from each acre each year—coming off the mountains and heading for town.

Between the geology-department roof and the San Gabriels, the city gradually rose. A very long, ramp-like, and remarkably consistent incline ended in the sheerness of the mountain

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wall. This broad uniform slope is where the seven tons an acre had emerged from the mountains, year upon year for a number of millions of years—accumulating as detrital cones, also known as fans. Broad at the bottom, narrow at the top, the fans were like spilled grain piling up at the edge of a bin. There were so many of them, coming down from stream after stream, that they had long since coalesced, forming a tilted platform, which the Spaniards had called the bajada.

"I used to live on the mountain front," Silver said. "By Devils Gate, at the mouth of Arroyo Seco. We could hear the big knockers go by—the three-metre boulders. The whole front face of the San Gabes is processed."

"Processed?"

"Shattered and broken. It is therefore vulnerable to landsliding, to undercutting by the streams, to acceleration by local earthquakes, to debris flows."

"Why does anybody live there?"

"They're not well informed. Most folks don't know the story of the fire-flood sequence. When it happens in the next canyon, they say, 'Thank God it didn't happen here.' "

"Why would a geologist live there?"

"It's a calculated risk. The higher you build, the cooler it is. There are great views. And at night, up there, the cool air off the mountains flows down and pushes the dirty air masses back. The head of our seismological laboratory lives on the mountain front. In fact, most of the Caltech geology department lives on the mountain front."

"Where do *you* live?"

"Way out on the fan."

Silver passed me along to his colleague Barclay Kamb—the tectonophysicist, X-ray crystallographer, and glaciologist, who discovered, among other things, the structures of the high-pressure forms of ice: ice II through ice IX. Kamb once studied the Sierra Madre Fault Zone on the San Gabriel mountain front, and walked the relevant canyons. Recently, he has been using a surging glacier near Yakutat as a laboratory for the study of how rocks move, since ice deforms in much the way that rock does. He was about to leave for Alaska when I dropped in on him in his office. His mother was there, his father, and his son Linus, who was named for Kamb's

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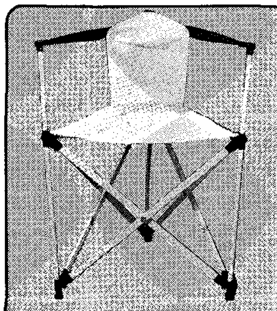

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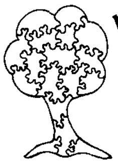

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father-in-law, Linus Pauling. In a swirl of ropes, ice axes, grad students, and relatives, Kamb, who has been described by another colleague as "the smartest man in the world," tracked six conversations simultaneously, one of which summarized concisely his sense of flowing debris. "There's a street in Altadena called Boulder," he began. "It is called Boulder for a very good reason. It is subject to severe threat. Boulder Road, below the Rubio Debris Basin, is the former course of Rubio Creek. You see encroachment of human habitation in many areas like that, which are most at risk. Above the debris basins, there are crib structures in the canyons. The theory is to prevent sediment from coming out of the mouths of the canyons. I think most geologists would say that is ridiculous. You're not changing the source of the sediment. You are just storing sediment. Those cribworks are less strong than nature's own constructs. The idea that you can prevent the sediment from coming out is meddling with the works of nature. Sooner or later, a flood will wipe out those small dams and scatter the debris. Everything you store might come out in one event. We're talking human time—not geologic time." Kamb lives in Pasadena, close by the mountain front.

Just upstairs was Andrew Ingersoll, the planetary scientist. In the San Gabriels, he had lived behind the lines. In the nineteen-sixties, he moved his family into a cabin that was so far up Big Santa Anita Canyon that they had to hike a mile and a quarter just to get to their car. They leased the place from the Forest Service. When they moved in, the children were three and four. Ingersoll was an assistant professor. "My colleagues in the geology department thought I was becoming a permanent hippie," he said. "But in those days everybody was some sort of hippie." The canyon was full of crib structures, arresting debris. Ingersoll did not know how to make sense of them unless they were "an example of bureaucracy doing something for its own sake." (In any case, the small wash above the Ingersolls' cabin was unprotected.) In January of 1969, during a nine-day series of storms, twelve inches of rain fell in one night. A debris flow hit the cabin, broke through a wall, and delivered three feet of mud, innumerable rocks, and one oak to the Ingersolls. The family regarded this as

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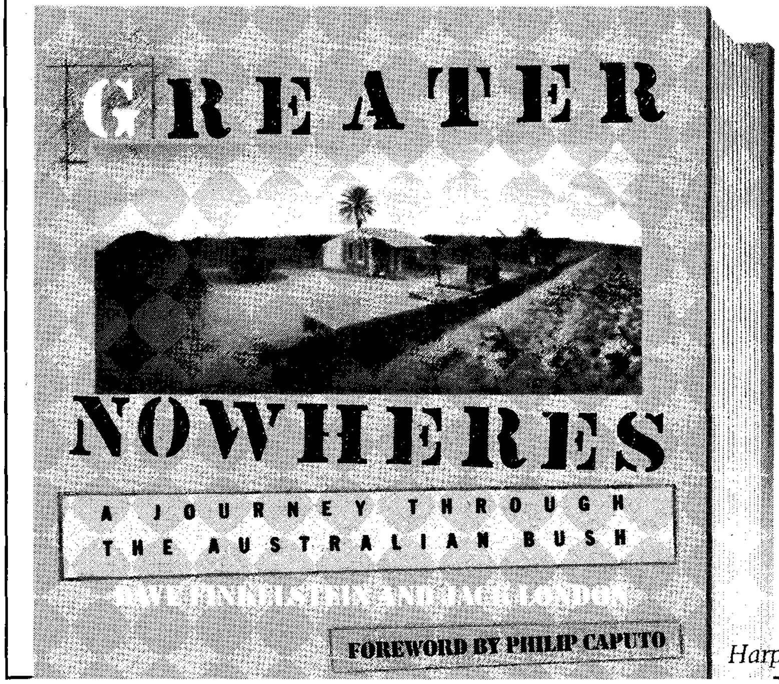
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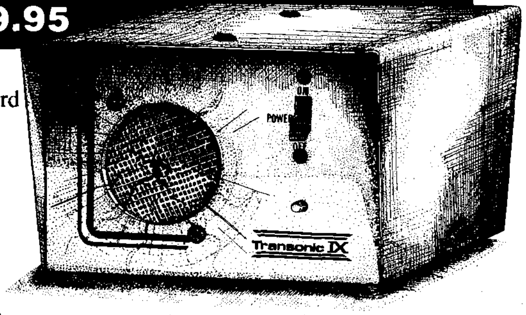

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“just a lot of fun,” he said, and continued, “Those little dams must have been nearly insignificant. They were based on the experience of Swiss farmers, and this may have been a totally different situation. It might have been a very poor concept to try to control the San Gabriels.”

I also met Vito Vanoni, who is now a professor emeritus. A formal, small, wiry man with a husky voice and a sweet smile, he is a civil engineer, and a founding and still central figure in Caltech’s Environmental Quality Laboratory. “That’s an awful pile of rock and dirt up there, and we’re proposing to hold it back,” he said. “To do something like that is extremely expensive, but there are so many of us here to pay the bill, to protect those who insist on living up there. Our zoning is not strong enough to prevent this. The forces of development are hard to oppose. Most people who buy property in those areas never see the map and wouldn’t know what they were looking at if they saw one. Very few are aware. When they see the concrete stream channels, I don’t know what they think. How many people really realize why the channels are there and why *they* are as big as they are? You can’t build a channel without a debris basin, or the debris will fill up the channel and then start sashaying back and forth. Debris basins have been built in response to the need of the community—after people have had sediment in their living rooms.”

I asked Vanoni where he lived.

“Up there,” he said. “Below Eaton Basin—since 1949. Like my neighbors, I figure that I’m protected. I haven’t seen anything across my yard yet.” After a pause, he added, “If they should have a failure up there, I’m afraid I’d get wet.” There was a longer pause, then another sweet smile, and he said, “I live a hundred yards from the Raymond Fault.”

—John McPhee

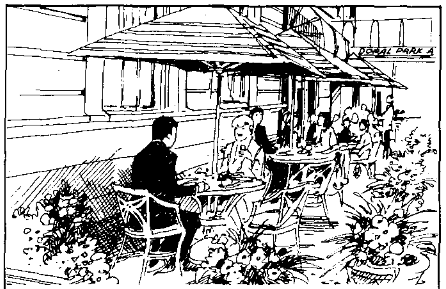
(*This is the first part of a two-part article.*)

•

REMARKS WE DOUBT EVER GOT MADE

[*From the Times*]

Mr. Quayle said that throughout his Southern trip, people came up to him to say, “We cannot afford to lose and to turn over the reins of government to somebody who doesn’t have the qualifications and the experience to handle the national security of America.”



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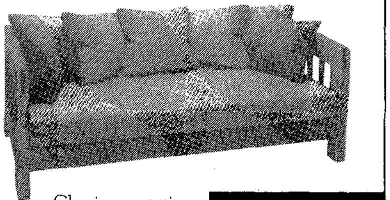

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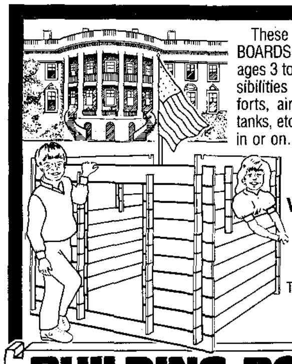

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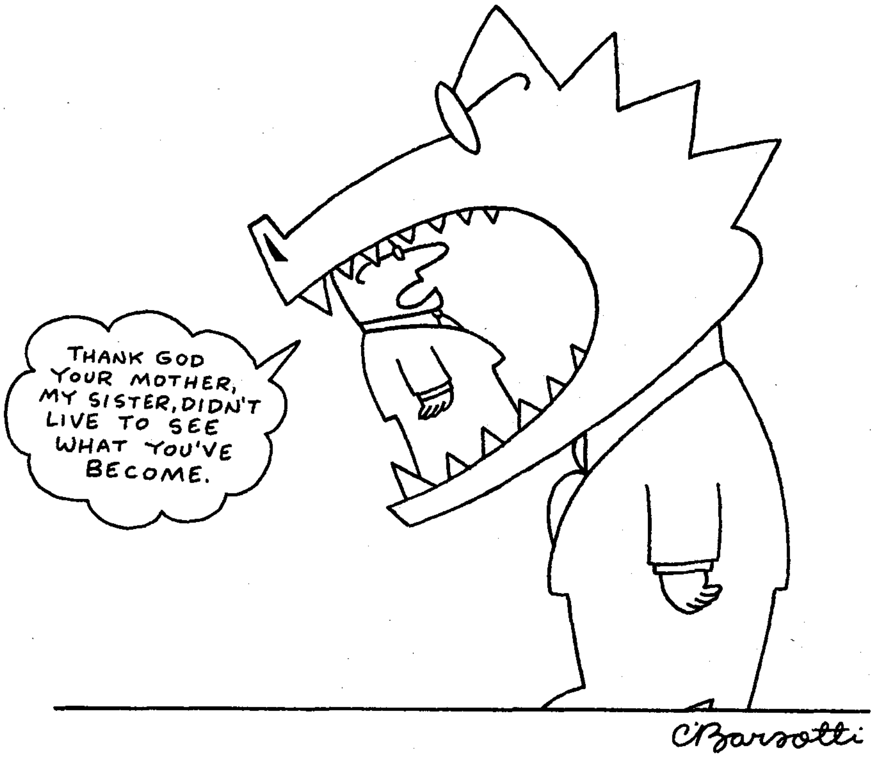
THE THEATRE

The Funniest Show in Town

Gerard Alessandrini is the wizard who created and directed and wrote the nimble, witty lyrics for "Forbidden Broadway 1988," as he did those for all previous editions of this anthology of parodies of the denizens of the Great White Way. The show has moved from the spacious upstairs room of a West Side restaurant to a real playhouse, Theatre East, on Sixtieth Street—a move not entirely to its advantage, as we shall see. The opening number, deafening and dazzling, is about electronic amplification and "computer laser effects," thus starting off with true satire, which mingles with the merry, acute parodies throughout the evening. I hoped that the management, having made a very important point, would then disconnect the mikes, which were not needed at all in the small auditorium. But they just toned them down, and the decibel levels were annoying from beginning to end. That complaint registered, I have nothing but praise for the four members of the company, all of them artists in mimicry—the two women, Toni DiBuono and Roxie Lucas, and the two men, David B. McDonald and Michael McGrath—and for the words they sing. Near the beginning, Miss DiBuono, as Patti LuPone, gives us her rendition of "I Get a Kick Out of Me," all sexy eagerness and no consonants. She is followed by Mr. McGrath—perpetual motion and heavy drag makeup—as Joel Grey in "Cabaret." Mr. McDonald, in gold top hat, cigar in hand, sings "Papp the Knife;" Miss DiBuono, beaming and wide-eyed, the embodiment of Carol Channing, sings "Hello, People!" and "Dolly Is a Girl's Best Friend." There is a very funny audience sing-along to a Stephen Sondheim kind of lyric of the utmost polysyllabic complexity. The sendup of "M. Butterfly,"—"the strangest show since 'Equus' "—to the strains of Puccini's "Un bel dì," is startling and wicked and dead on target. The devastating takeoff on "Les Misérables" ends with a wistful ballad in Edith Piaf style, which starts, "There was a time when shows were fun." In the funniest of the sketches, Professor Mamet, to the music of Frederick Loewe, sings, "I strain in vain to train Madonna's brain," and she replies, "How kind of you to let me act." It is indeed the funniest sketch, but also the only one that is not quite valid, partly because Madonna's performance in "Speed-the-Plow," which was exactly right, was so cruelly treated by the press. For all the acuity of the mimicry—the physical resemblances by these quick-change artists are at times uncanny—and the sharp wit of the words, there is no cruelty in "Forbidden Broadway." The lyrics are written with a relish that made me think of the young Lorenz Hart; surely there is something of him in Mr. Alessandrini. Because surprise is of the essence in comedy, I've tried to quote as little as possible, so as not to spoil the dandy jokes. Several of the numbers have been retained from previous editions; the first act is a little better than the second; and that is all, I guess, you need to know, except that the estimable accompaniment on piano is by Philip Fortenberry, the estimable choreography is by Miss Lucas, and the estimable costumes are by Erika Dyson.

In "Blues in the Night," at the Minetta Lane, four good singers—3 f, 1 m—appear as down-on-their-luck residents of a "cheap hotel," presumably in Chicago. There is a late-thirties atmosphere but no play, as such; one song simply follows another, some of them blues and others popular songs. The singers are Carol Woods, opulent in black; Brenda Pressley, graceful and sophisticated in pale satin; Leilani Jones, dolled up and pretty in pink; and Lawrence Hamilton, in a snazzy brown suit. It took me quite a while to warm to the show, until I realized that the show itself was warming slowly, as emotion slowly took over through the lonesome hours of the night. Miss Woods' agonized rendition of Bessie Smith's "Wasted Life Blues," near the end, is overwhelming; she is a remarkable actress, and can be funny, too. Most of the songs are familiar, but there are a few surprises. I never knew that "Stompin' at the Savoy" had a lyric, or that "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" could be sung mournfully, as it is here by the whole company; I'd always thought of it as ironic and humorous. Along with Bessie Smith and Ida Cox and the great Alberta Hunter are Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer and Vernon Duke and a woman named Ann Ronell, whose "Willow Weep for Me" is quite at home with the best of the songs.

—Edith Oliver


THANK GOD YOUR MOTHER, MY SISTER, DIDN'T LIVE TO SEE WHAT YOU'VE BECOME.
CBarsotti

A REPORTER AT LARGE

A MOMENT WE HAD TO GRASP

IN April of 1986, the Moscow branch of the Soviet Filmmakers' Union met to choose its delegates to a nationwide union congress. The usual procedure was for the leadership to propose exactly as many nominees as there would be delegates and for the rank and file to ratify the list en masse. This time, however, an ordinary member of the union exercised the right (until then, a theoretical one) to make an additional nomination, another member did the same, and another, until the list of names had nearly doubled. Then someone called for the creation of a special committee to count the ballots (this, too, was unprecedented), and when the counting was complete, at about four in the morning, the members learned that their first secretary, Lev Kulidjanov, and his allies Sergei Bondarchuk and Stanislav Rostotsky—three directors with long-standing ties to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to Goskino, the state film bureau—were not among the chosen delegates, and that, in all, about two-thirds of the original nominees had been defeated.

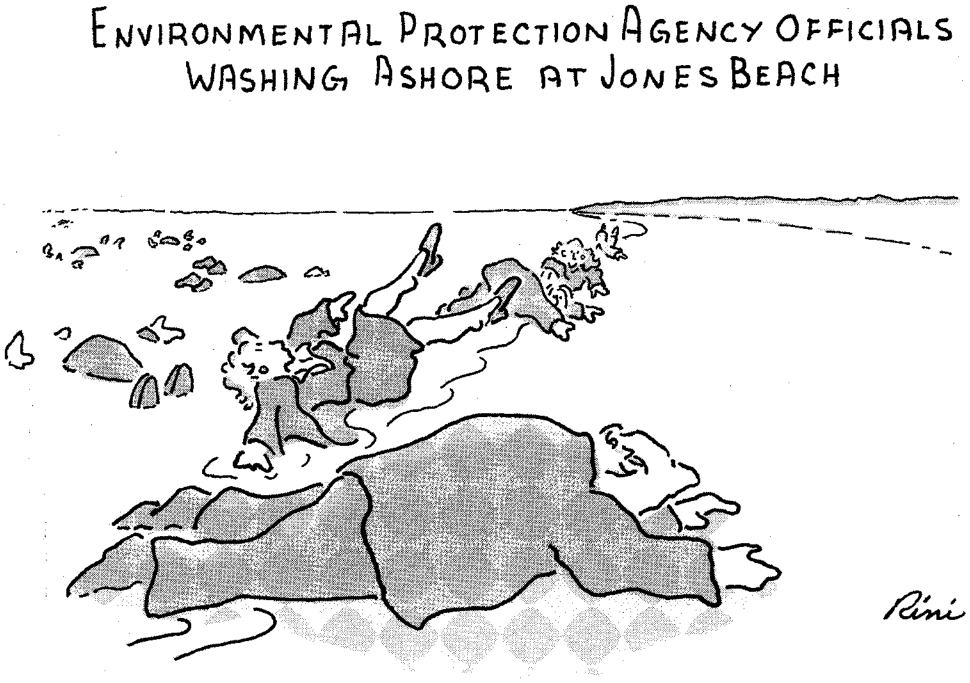
A month later, when the Filmmakers' Congress convened in the hall of the Supreme Soviet, the old leaders tried to reassert their authority. But the delegates—more than six hundred directors, writers, actors, cinematographers, critics, and technicians, representing branches of the union in all fifteen Soviet republics—hooted them off the stage and gave the same treatment to those who tried to defend them. (Prominent among the latter group was the popular actor-turned-director Nikita Mikhalkov, who was working on an Italian-produced film called "Dark Eyes," a loose adaptation of several Chekhov stories starring Marcello Mastroianni.) A security guard was overheard to remark that the behavior of the filmmakers was better suited to a brothel than to an official gathering inside the Kremlin.

When the insurgents took the floor, some of them spoke with extraordinary bluntness about what they were rebelling against. Eldar Shengelaya, a Georgian director known for his whimsical comedies, complained that the act of making a film had become "a bureaucratic carrousel around the real work." Goskino had so thoroughly involved itself in "petty concerns," he said, that "even the script for a ten-minute animated film, laid out in three or four pages, has to travel a surpassingly complicated path." The filmmakers from the outlying republics, Shengelaya went on, deserved to be named "distinguished passengers of Aeroflot," in recognition of all the trips they had made to Moscow in order to get their projects approved. Andrei Plakhov, a film critic for *Pravda*, spoke of a high-living circle of "untouchable" directors, "some of them having created significant works in the past," who "are now living off the moral capital of bygone days, and don't deserve either their privileged conditions or the continued success of their films with audiences." Plakhov cited, to loud applause, the example of Nikolai Burlayev, the director, writer, and star of a film about the nineteenth-century poet and novelist Mikhail Lermontov. "What inflated claims accompanied the première and, before that, the promotion of what was really a family affair, in which practically all the relatives of the director appeared," Plakhov complained—and the delegates applauded again. In the "hermetically sealed" environment of Soviet filmmaking, he said, young people with talent and original ideas almost invariably succumbed to the temptation to "take already bought and studio-approved scripts and shoot them fast, without great expenditure of spirit, using the standard collection of directorial tricks." Plakhov also took his own profession to task. Many of his fellow-critics—even some "known for their sharp pens," he said—were easily swayed by telephone calls from influential directors seeking to explain why this or that film deserved to be "supported." Critics who responded to such appeals, Plakhov added, were often rewarded with higher salaries.

The union wound up ousting well over half the two hundred and thirteen members of its plenum, or board of directors, and installing in their place a considerably younger group that included a startling number of writers and directors who had worked on films deemed unfit for release by Goskino. The new plenum, in turn, elected as first secretary of the union Elem Klimov, a director with a long record of censorship difficulties. In his acceptance speech Klimov proclaimed the right of filmmakers to make artistic decisions without state interference. "On questions of principle, concerning the defense of films and filmmakers, we will be uncompromising," he said. The union, he promised, would create "a new, businesslike, benevolent atmosphere," which would "resound in our films and in the soul of the people, to whom we are hugely in debt, having damaged so much in that soul."

The filmmakers' revolt was a sensational event among the country's intellectuals. Still, there was plenty of uncertainty at first about how far the new union regime would be allowed to go. "Some of our colleagues at Goskino," Klimov noted in his acceptance speech, "assume that all these speeches and articles will vanish in the air." A few weeks later, however, in a meeting with leaders of the Writers' Union, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev went out of his way to indicate his approval of what the filmmakers had done. Six months after that, he dismissed the longtime head of Goskino, Filipp Yermash—omitting the usual expression of gratitude for services rendered—and named a more liberal-minded replacement, Alexander Kamshalov, who seemed content with the diminished role that the new leaders of the union envisioned for him and his agency.

Last winter, I went to Moscow to find out how things had been going in the Soviet film world since the remarkable happenings of 1986. I timed my visit to coincide with an event called the Entertainment Summit: a series of meetings between Soviet filmmakers and a ten-member delegation from Hollywood that included the director Gilbert Cates; Jeffrey Berg, the chairman and chief executive officer of International Creative Management; the actors Dennis Weaver and Keith Carradine; and the English producer, and recently departed head of Columbia Pictures, David Puttnam. Officially, the summit took place in the daytime, and largely within the clean and modern confines of Dom Kino, the headquarters of the Filmmakers' Union, on Vasilievskaya Street. Unofficially, it lasted until all hours of the night, and sprawled across the city into restaurants, hotel rooms, and private homes. On my first morning in Moscow, I attended—along with most of the summiteers—a screening of "Forgotten Melody for the Flute," a comedy about a corrupt censor in the employ of an office known as the Department of Free Time, who professes to be a supporter of *glasnost* even as he relentlessly exploits his position for material (and sexual) advantage. After the screening, the film's director, Eldar Ryazanov, made an appearance. A large man, wide of jowl and dark of visage, Ryazanov began making films in the mid-nineteen-fifties, and such has been his record of success with the public that he has been called (by an American, of course) the Steven Spielberg of the Soviet Union. With an air of almost childlike excitement, Ryazanov announced that "Forgotten Melody" was the first film he had ever made "without receiving any correction from above." The same astonishment, tinged with what sounded like well-earned cynicism, was evident in a comment made by a bearded, bright-cheeked director I met at a dinner party that evening. "We are the advance troops of *glasnost* and *perestroika*," he said, with a glass in his hand and a grin on his face. "Gorbachev ordered the nation to march, and the filmmakers marched. Now we look around and see that we have left everybody else far behind." He took a sip of vodka and added, "Of course, we will be the first to lose our heads if the struggle goes badly."


ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY OFFICIALS WASHING ASHORE AT JONES BEACH
Rini

ELEM KLIMOV is a tall, thin, coolly handsome man with arching eyebrows, lively deep-set eyes, and a sense of fashion that would be appreciated on the streets of SoHo or Tribeca. In his middle fifties, he gives the impression of having only just begun to think of himself as not young, and several of his associates told me that his year and a half as head of the Filmmakers' Union had left its mark in the lines of his face. He was certainly a busy man during the Entertainment Summit, his days heavily booked with large, formal activities and his nights with small, informal ones. Even at the various parties, lunches, and receptions, he seemed weighed down by the burdens of his office, but he made a determined effort, just the same, to uphold his country's lately acquired reputation as a place where questions are answered without evasion.

"There are those who say that we have gone far enough," he told me, during a welcoming cocktail party at Dom Kino on the first night of the summit. He spoke in Russian—my wife, Natalie, was there to translate—and accentuated his words with elegant gestures that made his conversation seem almost choreographed. "Goskino no longer has us under its thumb, they say, so why should we make waves? But we are after nothing less than an essential restructuring of our film industry. We feel: If not us, who? If not now, when?"

Klimov entered the Moscow Film Institute in 1958, at a time when Soviet films seemed to be emerging from a long period of stultification. The young filmmakers of those years—the Khrushchev years—drew encouragement from such things as the stylistic freshness of Mikhail Kalatozov's "The Cranes Are Flying," the anti-Stalinist content of Grigori Chukrai's "Clear Skies," and the decision to establish, in affiliation with Mosfilm (the largest movie studio in the Soviet Union), a semi-autonomous ministudio that would share in the profits generated by its productions. Klimov's diploma film—much admired, although not widely shown—was a satire entitled "Welcome: No Unauthorized Personnel," about a boy expelled from a highly bureaucratic summer camp. His first full-length film had as its protagonist a young dentist ordered by Party officials to conceal a talent for pulling teeth painlessly. The real-life bureaucrats of Goskino responded much as their counterparts in the film had. "The Adventures of a Dentist" was shelved, and five years passed before Klimov was allowed to direct another film—a collage of documentary and fictional elements called "Sport,

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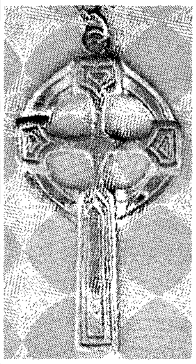

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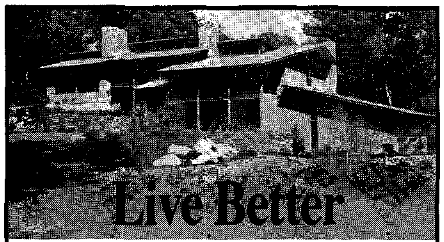

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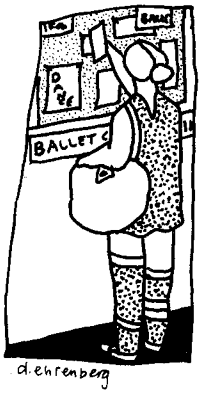
Sport, Sport," which he did not take very seriously, and which, perhaps as a result, is the only film of his that has been made and released without delay. His third feature, "Agony," dealt with the last days of the reign of Czar Nicholas II. Klimov and his screenwriters spent months in historical archives, trying to recapture the truth about a much manipulated moment in Russian history. Then they spent seven years, on and off, trying to get the script approved. Twice, Klimov began production, only to be ordered to halt. He completed the film in 1975, but—apart from a screening at the 1983 Moscow Film Festival—it was not shown for the next ten years. Klimov never received an official explanation, but the reasons were conveyed to him informally. "The officials thought that the role of Rasputin in history was enlarged, that too much sympathy was shown to the Czar, and that not enough attention was given to the Bolsheviks," he told me.

When Americans think of oppression in the Soviet Union, we tend to think of the fates of those brave or reckless enough to be identified as dissidents. Klimov and his allies in the Filmmakers' Union have been careful to avoid that label. They have learned to operate on the margins of the permissible, occasionally bringing the wrath of officialdom down on their work but never on themselves. To listen to them talk about the Brezhnev years—the so-called "period of stagnation," which represents, for them, almost the normal condition of things—is to conjure up a different image of oppression: routine, subtle, and, though ready to deal cruelly with acts of direct defiance, not inflexible in less extreme situations.



In the seventies, Soviet film audiences were fed a diet rich in, as Klimov put it, "pompous films about war, liberation, and victory, or about the head of a factory or a collective who struggles to increase production." Browsing through a recent catalogue issued by Sovexportfilm (an agency whose name nicely conveys its function), I came across "Nine Days of One Year," a film "dedicated to Soviet scientists working in nuclear physics," and detailing "their readiness for an exploit for the benefits of science;" "The Birth," a portrait of "Lenin's companion-in-arms, the head of the first government of Soviet Armenia, Alexander Myasnikyan . . . a genuine internationalist," who demonstrated that "Armenia can get freedom and national independence only in the union with Soviet Russia;" and "The Taste of Bread," about "the destinies of three people—the director of a state farm, a scientist, and a Party leader—who faced the greatest difficulties in the first stage of the reclamation of virgin lands in Kazakhstan."

"In most countries, you make either films that are high art or films for the general public—for people to enjoy," one director told me. "But in the political situation that existed here for so long the vast majority of films were of neither type. They were made to please the people in Goskino, and nobody watched them."

The writers and directors who turned out these "necessary films," as they were known in the industry, received frequent assignments, generous budgets, and virtual immunity from criticism in the press. The uncompliant filmmakers, meanwhile, were inactive for long periods between films, fought for every ruble, and enjoyed Goskino's close and constant scrutiny. Even when they succeeded in getting permission to make a film, they had to wonder if anyone would ever see it, for the transgressions that could land a film on the shelf were many, and some of them were far from obvious. Andrei Konchalovsky's "Asya's Happiness," for example, is believed to have been suppressed for presenting a gloomy picture of rural life, and Alexei Gherman's "Trial on the Road" for suggesting that not every Soviet soldier taken prisoner by the Nazis was necessarily a traitor. Before deciding to shelve a film, Goskino would sometimes ask for cuts, but it would be up to the director to coöperate or not. Even in noncoöperation, however, there was an acceptable and an unacceptable style—a code of behavior, one might say, for the uncompliant filmmaker. It was all right to refuse to make changes, as Klimov repeatedly did. It was not all right to engage in a protracted protest against the suppression of one's work, as Alexander Askoldov did after his film "Commissar" was shelved, twenty years ago. Askoldov was eventually pronounced "professionally incompetent" by Goskino and has not yet managed to direct another film.

The work of Klimov's wife, Larissa Shepitko, also aroused the concern of the censors. One of her early films, "Homeland of Electricity," was not only suppressed but, in the official records, destroyed. Only the reckless decision of the film editor to save a single print ("She could have been fired, or worse," Klimov told me) made it possible, twenty years later, to produce a new negative and show the film on Soviet television. In photographs from the mid- and late seventies, they are a striking couple: Klimov, in his customary black leather jacket, an unusually prepossessing example of what the English might call an Angry Young Man; and Shepitko a warm, assured, attractive woman with smartly styled short, dark hair and so much radiance and energy that she seems more alive in two dimensions than most people do in three. In 1979, she began work on a film of the novel "Farewell to Matyora," the story of an island village that had to be evacuated because of rising water caused by an ill-conceived hydroelectric dam. Only a few days into shooting, Shepitko and several crew members were killed in a car crash, and Klimov took over as director. "Farewell," as the film was called, sat on the shelf for five years before being given a perfunctory release. Like the book, it was criticized for "tragedizing" the threat to the environment, and the authorities took the liberty of turning down an invitation to enter it in the Cannes Film Festival, lest foreign viewers extrapolate too much from the story.

During the production of "Farewell," Klimov took time out to make a memorial film about his wife. (He has not remarried.) His next feature, completed in 1985, was a war story called "Come and See," about a Belorussian boy who joins the partisans and witnesses the annihilation of a village by the Nazis. Even with this clearly patriotic project, Klimov managed—by the grimness of his treatment—to land himself in bureaucratic difficulties, and he was criticized within the film world for using hypnosis to put his leading actor, an inexperienced teen-ager, in the right frame of mind. But "Come and See" was very popular, and its success led to an improvement in Klimov's standing with the bureaucrats at Goskino.

It has been suggested that the upheaval in the Filmmakers' Union happened on secret instructions from Mikhail Gorbachev. Klimov insists that there were no such instructions. "It just happened poetically—it was a moment we had to grasp, because who knew if it would come again," he told me. In a general way, however, Gorbachev had called on the creative unions to take a more active role in exposing the ills of Soviet society, and he had given a sarcastic dressing-down to Klimov's predecessor, Lev Kulidjanov, for his sycophantic response to the General Secretary's speech at the Twenty-seventh Communist Party Congress, in February of 1986. (Kulidjanov had saluted Gorbachev's "profound analysis," and spoken of his own "involuntary regret" that the address had, after five and a half hours, come to an end.)

One of the first steps taken by the union's new leaders was to set up a commission to review suppressed films; with Goskino's approval, it wound up liberating dozens of them, including "Commissar," which deals with anti-Semitism in the Ukraine during the twenties; "The Forest," an adaptation of a play by Alexander Ostrovsky, shelved for unstated aesthetic reasons; "Theme," in which a major character is a Jew working as a gravedigger while he awaits permission to emigrate to Israel; and "Repentance," a frightening parable of Stalinism.

Because a feature film can take a year or more to complete, the first features conceived under the new industry regime were only starting to appear at the time of my visit. In the documentary field, however, results were already plentiful, as I learned on viewing a program—prepared for the summit—of excerpts from recent Soviet documentaries. In one, a veteran described the war in Afghanistan as "a chance to walk into any house with a machine gun and kill." Another told the story of a Communist Party functionary who, fed up with politics, became a hermit in Siberia. In a third, an old

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man living near the site of a Stalinist prison camp recalled a time when as many as a hundred people a day were executed there, and the narrator added, "Most of those who were arrested had stayed true to the party of Lenin. . . . We must remember this."

"Four years ago, they would have put you in prison for making such films," a documentary scriptwriter named Leonid Gurevich told me over lunch at Dom Kino after the screening. A heftily built man in his fifties, with a pale, cherubic face, Gurevich was the writer of one of the documentaries we had viewed—a film called "Scene at the Fountain," about a natural-gas fire that burned for more than a year on the shore of the Caspian Sea. The film emphasized the incompetent management of the pipeline and favorably portrayed the contributions of an American—the oil-and-gas-fire specialist Red Adair—who had been instrumental in extinguishing the fire.

Gurevich spoke with delight about the "root changes" that the Soviet film industry had experienced but added that he was far from satisfied with the films that had resulted. "It's not enough for films just to point to what's wrong with society," he explained. "The drawbacks must be put in some positive context. Before, the road upward in this society was for people who applauded everything. Now the danger is that the road upward will be for people who are critical of everything—and there will still be no artistic standards."

With Goskino basically out of the censorship business, the power to approve or disapprove a film now belongs to studio officials, who are directors, writers, cinematographers, dramaturges, and actors—and, all of them, members of the Filmmakers' Union. Thus, according to Klimov, "artistic decisions are made by artists." But they need not be artists without views of what is politically or ideologically acceptable, and their views need not be innocent of all awareness of what would cause the Party to reactivate the machinery of censorship. One screenwriter told me that a film can say anything as long as it doesn't criticize Gorbachev or a member of the Politburo. "Criticize" may be rather broadly defined, however, for after we saw the excerpts from "Coming Home," the documentary about Afghanistan, Klimov praised it as a means of "preparing" the Soviet people for a withdrawal of troops. When he was asked if it would be possible to make a film supporting the war, he answered, "Hardly."

Over the years, Goskino has doled out funds to the various studios in proportions only distantly related to the earnings of each studio's films. Soviet movie theatres have not always bothered to keep track of the number of tickets sold for one film as opposed to another. Within a few years, however, if a plan drafted by the Filmmakers' Union and Goskino gains the necessary approvals—including, finally, the Supreme Soviet's—each studio will become a largely self-sustaining enterprise, although, according to Klimov, "we won't allow a studio to fall apart." This is the touchiest element in the reform program. Under the present setup, the film studios provide their employees with a host of benefits, including apartments, access to special infirmaries and hospitals, and even playgrounds for their children. A studio employee can also count on receiving film assignments at more or less regular intervals. ("Everyone takes his turn," Klimov told me, in a voice that conveyed his disgust with that arrangement.) The proposals now under consideration call for the full-time staffs of the studios to shrink to a fraction of their present size, so that most filmmakers will become free-lancers. But the Soviet Union is a society that has never recognized free-lancers. "If you're not on staff," Klimov explained, "the police can show up and say, 'Who are you? You're a vagabond. You're a bum.' Naturally, people are frightened. We have to figure out how to insure the social status of people who are free agents."

A point in favor of the union's program is the hope that the studios, under the influence of market forces, will begin to earn serious money from the release of their films in the West, and the related hope that Western companies will begin to invest in film production in the Soviet Union. It is said that when Soviet citizens see images of the United States in movies or television shows they often respond more intensely to the material possessions of ordinary Americans than to the story—perhaps thwarting the efforts of some programming official to highlight an unsavory aspect of American life. When Soviet directors see an American film, their attention often centers on its technical qualities, and on the equipment and materials with which it was made: cameras, sound systems, special-effects devices, and even film stock. Soviet film stock, besides being inferior, is scarce, and during the period of stagnation it was especially scarce for films not regarded as "necessary." So little was allotted to Klimov's "Agony" that whenever he completed a take his cinematographer immediately seized a knob on the camera in order to save the half-metre or so of film that might otherwise be uselessly exposed. ("There was blood on his hands from stopping the camera in this way," Klimov recalled. "On that film, I also did something I don't like to do: I treated the actors as though they were children. Often we had only enough film for one take, so I said that there was film in the camera when there wasn't, in order to get a scene just right before we shot it.") While a typical Hollywood film might have a shooting ratio—the ratio of exposed stock to the running time of the finished film—of twenty to one, Soviet filmmakers are accustomed to a ratio more like six to one.

One of the things the union membership held against its former leaders was their failure to fight for the industry over issues like this. Another was the seeming ability of the leaders themselves to get all the film stock they wanted; Sergei Bondarchuk, I was told, worked with a shooting ratio of fifty to one on his version of "War and Peace." It is a point of pride with Klimov, however, that the former leaders of the union have not been "expelled from the Garden of Eden." Bondarchuk has his own production unit at Mosfilm. Lev Kulidjanov teaches directing at the All-Union Institute of Cinematography. Vladimir Naumov, also an ex-member of the union secretariat, recently completed a film, and another ex-member, Yuri Ozerov, is planning one about the Battle of Stalingrad—"yet another of his expensive and labor-consuming screen works about the war," according to Klimov.

IN October, 1986, Klimov made a trip to New York for the American première of "Come and See." There he was approached by an American screenwriter-producer named Mark Gerzon, who advanced the notion of a get-together of Soviet and American filmmakers. Klimov seized on the idea, and was one of nine Soviets at the first Entertainment Summit, in Los Angeles, in March of 1987. The purpose of that visit—an agenda proposed by the American side—was to address the problem of stereotypes in American films with Soviet characters ("Red Dawn," "Rocky IV," "Invasion U.S.A.," and the miniseries "Amerika") and in Soviet films with American characters ("Flight 222," "Solo Voyage," and "Incident at Map Grid 36-80"). Delegates from both countries expressed regret about the tone of these works and vowed to do better in the future. But the Soviet delegation also took the opportunity to learn a little about Hollywood ways, and Klimov went home feeling envious both of the sophisticated technology in Hollywood and of certain businesslike habits of organization. The second summit (the one taking place in Moscow during my visit) adopted a more practical goal: to encourage co-productions and other forms of coöperation between the two film industries, on the theory that as Soviet filmmakers rubbed elbows with American filmmakers they would pick up some of those good habits—and, perhaps, some of that good equipment.

On a Sunday morning, in a large conference room on the ground floor of Dom Kino—a room decorated for the occasion with blowups of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev taken during their own recent summit, in Washington—Soviet and American filmmakers sat around a cluster of tables and talked about the obstacles in the way of co-productions. Mark Gerzon, a sandy-haired, handsome, and conspicuously healthy Californian, tried to explain at the outset that he and his companions had come to talk about general problems rather than to work out individual deals. But the distinction was lost on most of the Soviet participants. Individual deals were exactly what they wanted to talk about. Eldar Ryazanov, for example, was looking for advice on how to attract foreign investment for a film adaptation of "Three Sisters." The initial step, he was told, would be to find an English-language screenwriter to work with him. A Soviet-American co-production would have to be shot in English, or in both languages at once, Ryazanov was informed, and its Western backers would want to see a script that showed an understanding of the American market.

"And that's the first conflict," Ryazanov said. "Because for us Chekhov is a cultural icon, while as far as Americans are concerned every classic can be kicked around. When I think of what an American writer could do with a Chekhov play, I imagine the horror that would greet this film in the Soviet Union. He might even add sex scenes." The Americans pooh-poohed this concern, but Ryazanov remained fearful. One of the novelties of "Forgotten Melody for the Flute" was a glimpse of its female lead in a state of undress. "It's a completely innocent scene," Ryazanov said, "but she has already received letters from her fans calling her a whore."

The Kirghizian director Tolomush Okeyev—a man with Asian features and a seemingly beatific temperament—described his efforts to line up some Hollywood money for a film about Genghis Khan. He was prepared to shoot the film in English as well as in Russian (this meant doing two takes of every closeup and dubbing the long shots), to hire several American actors of Asian origin, and to collaborate with an American screenwriter. "I even agreed to let him put some American clichés into this film," Okeyev said, "because—and I look to Gorbachev and Reagan for my inspiration—without conceding anything how can we gain anything?" In his financial discussions with one potential Hollywood backer, however, Okeyev had gradually come to the conclusion that he was being bamboozled. "He seemed to think I was a fool," Okeyev said. "What could have given him this idea? Do you think it was this face?" He assumed an expression of overwhelming innocence, not very different from his normal expression. "How can we be assured that business dealings will be conducted in a gentlemanly way—that we will not be tricked?" he asked. "We must have a lawyer when we negotiate with the American film industry—a lawyer who will be on our side, and will explain things to us."

Bruce Ramer, the lawyer in the American delegation—his clients include Steven Spielberg and Clint Eastwood—agreed but added, "It's also important to know the people you're dealing with—their reputation. We have an expression: An agreement is only as good as the people who sign it."

"And in a business negotiation you must know what you want," David Puttnam observed. "If not, you will get raped. These situations tend to attract fringe characters."

Jeffrey Berg, of I.C.M., mentioned the need for a completion bond—an insurance policy guaranteeing that a film will be finished without exceeding a certain cost.

"That means that if the picture gets in trouble the completion-bond company has the right to replace the director," Ramer explained, for the benefit of the Soviet participants.

"We're touching on something terribly important about the Western system," said Puttnam, "which is that in every crisis the businessmen control the artist."

Ryazanov said he wasn't bothered by the idea of a completion bond, because "time and again our foreign partners were people who couldn't cope with problems and collapsed before the film could be made. On our side, the partner is the state, so you can reproach us for this and that—sometimes the schedule may be a little elongated—but your partner is financially secure."

Berg undertook to trace the process that a typical Soviet-American co-production might go through after the film had been shot and edited. "To open a Class A movie in the United States costs a minimum of four and a half to five million dollars—for televi-

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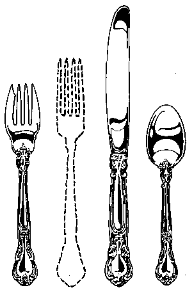

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sion and newspaper advertising, and the cost of striking the prints," he said. "Before a distributor is willing to make that investment, there must be a series of public screenings, and at the end of each preview there is an analysis of the movie. Cards are passed out to the audience, and marketing specialists analyze the cards. They analyze which sections of the picture were slow—where the audience's attention wandered, and so on. Another section of the card pertains to demographics. For example, with 'Genghis Khan' the target audience wouldn't be teen-age girls. At the end of the card is an overall rating: How good do you think this film is? Would you recommend it to your friends? Many films that do very well may have been poorly received at the screenings, and vice versa, but the studios nevertheless pay close attention to these cards. If the rating is low, the studio may want to make changes to improve the film—and there's the problem. Many foreign directors have a lot of trouble with this process."

Ryazanov asked the Americans to tell him how "Forgotten Melody for the Flute" would fare in the United States. They had praised it lavishly after the screening, but now they hedged.

"The editorial rhythms of your movie are basically inconsistent with the rhythms an American audience is used to," Berg told him.

"Slower?" Ryazanov asked.

Berg nodded. "Also, the use of fantasy and dream imagery would be a confusing element," he said.

"Jeffrey has brought up a very real problem, which we filmmakers in Europe suffer from, too," said Puttnam. "The American film rhythm is a faster rhythm. We're dealing with a young audience. They watch things on television that move"—he snapped his fingers—"like that."

"You might try making Soviet children watch three hours of MTV a day," Ramer suggested. The other members of the American delegation greeted his proposal with laughter. As for the Soviets, it appeared from their expressions that they had never heard of MTV.

IN May of 1986—the same month, as it happened, that the Soviet filmmakers rose up against their leaders—David Puttnam was summoned from London to Atlanta to tell the top brass of the Coca-Cola Corporation how he proposed (with their permission) to run Columbia Pictures. Puttnam was an independent producer with his roots in the London advertising world. He had made several small and idiosyncratic (and very English) films, but he had also made "Chariots of Fire" and "The Killing Fields," which, by achieving critical and commercial success without the use of major stars or big-name directors, suggested an alternative approach to that being pursued by the current Columbia management, on whose watch a Warren Beatty–Dustin Hoffman megacomedy entitled "Ishtar" was in the midst of going seventeen million dollars over budget. Puttnam went into his meeting in Atlanta armed with a short but grandly phrased memo in which he vowed not to let Columbia be pushed around by high-powered stars, agents, and producers; to cut costs by, among other things, hiring foreign directors and first-time directors; to turn Columbia into a worldwide, not just an American, company; and to produce films that Columbia, and Coca-Cola, would be proud of. "The medium is too powerful and too important an influence on the way we live—the way we see ourselves—to be left *solely* to the tyranny of the box office or reduced to the sum of the lowest common denominator of public taste," the memo explained.

In some business environments, these vaguely humanistic, fiscally conservative words—coming, as they did, from a man with near-shoulder-length hair, a bristly salt-and-pepper beard, and a tendency to dress in rumpled corduroy—would not have been regarded as anything more than the normal breast-beating of a newly appointed chief executive. But in Hollywood, and especially in the Hollywood press, Puttnam was treated as a serious subversive even before he assumed his post. Once in office, he kept his profile high by hiring his countrymen in numbers sufficient to get the studio nicknamed British Columbia; firing Dan Aykroyd from a film called "Vibes" rather than let him dictate the choice of his co-star; rejecting every script proffered by Ray Stark, a well-connected producer who had a long-standing relationship with Columbia (and an expectation that it would continue); complaining about highly paid actors who refused to put any of their earnings back into the industry; applying a policy of benign neglect to "Ishtar," the studio's most expensive pending product; and all but closing the door on costly "packages" put together by agents—in particular, by Michael Ovitz, whose firm represented Aykroyd, Hoffman, and Sylvester Stallone, among other clients.

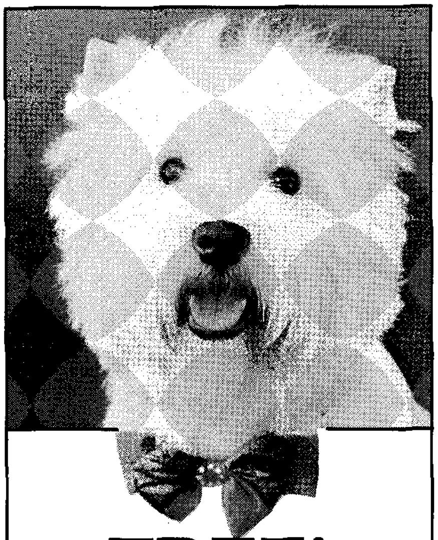
Puttnam had lasted barely fifteen months at Columbia, not even enough time for the returns to start coming in on the films he had commissioned (although a few that he had bought in a completed state—"The Big Easy," "Hope and Glory," and "The Last Emperor"—were doing quite well). His abrupt departure, however, had left Hollywood in a sort of post-Napoleonic daze, and the justice of it was still a hot topic. As for Puttnam himself, he was preparing to return to his former career as an independent producer based in England, and he remained, to all appearances, as upbeat as ever. There was something in his demeanor—a bouncy energy, a glint in his eyes—which commanded attention. In Moscow, he was constantly on the receiving end of scripts, treatments, and pitches, and from the intensity of his interest it was impossible to tell that he no longer had the right to approve projects costing up to thirty million dollars apiece. Nor had the loss of his power base robbed him of the impulse to talk about his credo as a filmmaker, and so, with his presence, the Entertainment Summit became an occasion on which, it might be said, the vectors of two film revolutions intersected.

On the first night of the summit, Leo Bakradze, a Georgian director with an apartment in Moscow, invited the American delegation to dine with him. Like most of the filmmakers whose homes I visited, Bakradze has a big-screen TV, a VCR, and a commodious dining room—a two-chandelier room that doubles as his library, the shelves containing not only books but a collection of bright and exotic dolls that compose a kind of balcony audience for a dinner party. Twenty people gathered around Bakradze's table, which was densely packed with small plates of caviar, meat pies, and this and that—far more food than the guests could possibly eat—and plenty of vodka, wine, beer, and cognac besides. Temperance appeared to be one part of the Gorbachev program which had yet to take hold among the filmmakers. Bakradze got things going with several lengthy toasts—playful elaborations on traditional Georgian tributes to women, to the guests, and to the parents of everyone present. Then Tolomush Okeyev toasted the day when "we will be rid of the concepts of capitalism and socialism," explaining, "Who needs these systems and their differences when, if they keep fighting, there will be no earth, no life?"

The Americans, clearly, had entered the big leagues of toasting, and their initial efforts were decidedly slapdash. But Puttnam rose to the occasion. "We in the West take for granted two things that you dream of," he told the Soviets. "We take for granted our freedom and we take for granted our material well-being. But you take for granted something that we only dream of—a sense of community and lifelong friendships. We who posture much and risk little salute you who posture very little and risk a great deal."

AT the beginning of the second week of the summit, the site shifted to Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. The Georgians are known for, among other things, their bountiful hospitality, and Eldar Ryazanov sent the Americans away with a warning. "Now you are going to Georgia," he said. "There are many wonderful films to be seen there, but you will have to make a choice—whether to spend all your time eating and drinking, or to save a little time for Georgian films." The first day of the two-day trip was given over to a sightseeing tour of Tbilisi—a lively city full of ornate pre-revolutionary buildings in pastel colors—and the first night to the fifty-fifth birthday party of Eldar Shengelaya, who is the head of the Georgian branch of the Filmmakers' Union. This was another overwhelming feast, with vast quantities of vodka, Georgian wine, hors d'oeuvres, and shashlik delivered on spits that Errol Flynn would not have been ashamed to carry into battle against Basil Rathbone. There was singing as well as toasting; a trio of young women sang several lovely Georgian folk songs, and at intervals the men—all of them—stood and emitted wordless polyphonic harmonies that sounded as if they had floated over several mountain ranges on the way to Eldar Shengelaya's living room.

Not until the late morning of the



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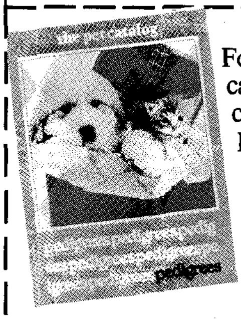

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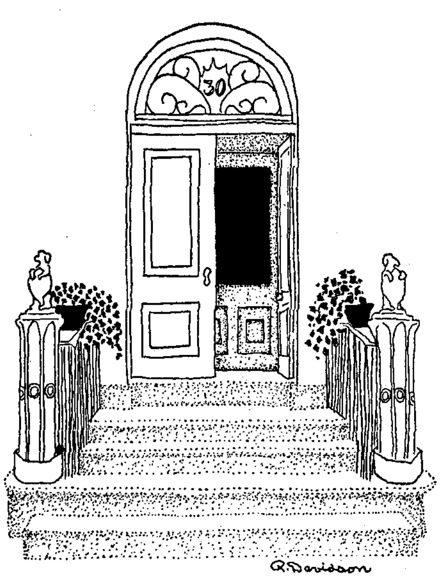
second day in Tbilisi did the Americans get their first taste of business—a panel discussion in the main auditorium of the local headquarters of the Filmmakers' Union. Rezo Chkeidze, the head of Gruziafilm, the Georgian national film studio, seemed to regard the meeting as an opportunity to enumerate the many attractions that Georgia could offer an American movie producer. "We've got very interesting directors, very interesting actors, cameramen, designers, at your service," he announced. "We've got mountains. We've got unique architecture. We can make musicals, love stories, historical productions. Our history is very rich, and it is connected with the ancient world. Greek heroes came to Georgia for the sheepskin"—this was an allusion to what we know as the legend of Jason and the golden fleece—"and we also have a very interesting script about the history and origins of Tbilisi. I can recite a thousand plots for co-productions."

Chkeidze then yielded the stage to Georgy Shengelaya, the younger brother of our host of the night before. Eldar Shengelaya is an easygoing man with short, curly gray hair and a face that seems to be forever poised on the brink of laughter, if it hasn't already gone over the brink. Georgy is a more serious customer—a handsome, Georgian-looking Georgian, with a wide forehead, thick black hair, and a jutting chin. You would not have any difficulty guessing which man makes comedies and which dramas, and as Georgy Shengelaya spoke it became apparent that the tone of the proceedings was changing—that beneath the warmth and jocularity of the previous night's festivities lay, among some of the Georgian filmmakers, a certain impatience, a suspicion, a put-up-or-shut-up attitude toward the Americans. For all the talk of co-productions, there had been very little action, Shengelaya observed in an irritated voice, and most of the deals that had been made with foreign companies were service contracts, in which the Georgians and their facilities were engaged to add an element of the exotic at bargain rates. "If your presence here is intended to introduce some new phase in our relations, I'd like to hear some concrete suggestions," he said. Then he described, at length, a project of his—an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's short novel "Hadji Murad," which he had been trying to launch since 1963. He waved an old, yellowed letter of refusal from Goskino. "Now I'm going to return to this project, and since you are here I'd like you to look into it. I've prepared a synopsis, which I'm going to hand to David Puttnam."

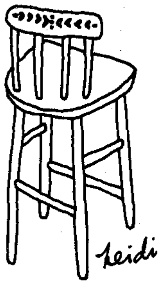
"I sense a great deal of frustration in the room, and, as a filmmaker, I understand frustration very well," Puttnam said when Shengelaya had finished talking up "Hadji Murad." "So I won't waste time being particularly polite, because we were very polite to each other last night, and I hope we'll be very polite to each other again tonight. I'll just try to be as brutally realistic as I can be with you, because I think that's the way I can be most helpful to you." The Georgians had to understand, he said, that American and English writers, directors, and producers "have been as frustrated as you are by the enormous obstacles they face in bringing their dreams to the screen within a capitalist system—and we have as much of a responsibility to use the notion of co-production to help our own filmmakers as to help you." He urged his audience to "lose the notion once and for all that we are here merely to put your creative dreams on the screen, without a price being paid in return." Instead, he said, the two sides should be trying to figure out how to make films that reflected their "shared dreams." Puttnam spoke quickly, in short, rhythmic bursts. "What we should concentrate on this morning," he said, "is determining *exactly* what you want out of a co-production, and *exactly* what you're prepared to give up."

Georgy Shengelaya had scarcely cracked a smile at his brother's birthday party, and now he sat expressionless as Puttnam ticked off some of the requirements that a Georgian film would have to meet in order to reach a sizable audience in the United States.



"The first reasonable expectation of your Western co-producer is a sophisticated and perfect English-language soundtrack, because the marketplace for subtitled films in the West is financially insignificant," Puttnam said. "Now, there are three ways of reconciling this problem. You can take a deep breath and attempt to work in the English language, as some of the younger French directors are doing. Or you can seek out in the West some able and experienced dialogue directors whom you trust, and go to the time and trouble of shooting in two languages; it's complicated, but it's possible. Or you can invest time and money in the kind of sophisticated dubbing process used by Bernardo Bertolucci; the English-language version of the film '1900' was so beautifully dubbed and mixed that it would have been almost impossible for anyone to know that it was not originally made in English. In any case, you must address our language problem, because it is sociologically impossible for us to retrain our audiences to accept the type of loose dubbing arrangements common in the Italian and the French cinema. This problem will require some very real soul-searching on your part. All of a sudden, you will have a responsibility to an audience that is not the audience you've understood in the past. In order to take this whole initiative any further, you will have to emotionally, intellectually, and creatively cross that bridge."

Ever since his arrival in the Soviet Union, Puttnam said, he had been hearing criticism of "Dark Eyes"—one director had dismissed it as "an Intourist version of Chekhov"—but the Georgians ought to know that "in the West it is regarded as a marvellous film." He continued, "I don't know how many of you in this room have had the experience of sitting in cinemas in the West watching your own movies. I suspect that all of you have had the experience of having your films torn apart in a critical way in your own country. I know very well how disheartening it is to be criticized at home for petty nuances when the same film is achieving exactly the reaction you as a filmmaker wished for it when it's viewed by millions of people all over the world. So I'm urging you to take the advantages that co-production can offer you, and to have the breadth of imagination to understand that what you're giving up—and you will be giving something up—is compensated for by what you're getting in return. Our purpose here is to invite you into global cinema, with all its advantages and all its very great dangers. But don't even bother to take the first step along this road if you're not prepared to make the compromises and go through the pain that's necessary. They have an expression in the United States: There's no such thing as a free lunch."



There was a considerable stirring in the audience as these words were translated, and I sensed that Puttnam's approach was not going over very well. David Shalikashvili, a television director, was moved to tell the story of a West German-Soviet co-production—a television version of the ballet "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." The cast, he said, included fourteen principal dancers, thirteen of them from the Soviet Union and one from the United States. "She is an average ballet star," Shalikashvili said, "and yet we have to pay this American girl one hundred and fifty thousand West German marks. If we had to pay such a salary to each of the Soviet dancers, the film would never get made. Mind you, the designer and the director are Soviet, and the composer and the director of photography are German. The shooting of the main part of the film will be in the Soviet Union—only twenty days will take place in Germany. And—about the film's distribution—the West German side pays us half a million marks for the right to distribute it in Europe without our participation. In other parts of the world, we will get only fifty per cent of the profits. So my question is: Do you consider this a free lunch?"

His question was not to be answered, however, because Georgy Shengelaya was also itching to respond to Puttnam.

"It was very interesting, what David told us, but we know very well all these things," he said. "So once more I'm asking you whether this visit was intended to get us acquainted with each other or if it will deal with practical questions."

During Puttnam's tenure at Columbia, his friends had often pleaded with him to be more diplomatic, but his idea of diplomacy had been to write long letters or memos setting down the reasons for what he had said or done, and sometimes his letters and memos compounded the original offense. Now, once again, he was seized by the desire to explain himself. "I accept the fact that some of the people in this room understand these problems and are already involved in co-productions," he said. "But I must tell you that insofar as the English-language cinema is concerned you are failing miserably. You are all failing miserably. Your films—even the successful ones—are being seen by a handful of people at film festivals, in a small cinema in New York, not at all in Los Angeles, and possibly by a tiny group of people in San Francisco. This has nothing whatsoever to do with the role of world cinema. You are like people in a small room talking to yourselves. Maybe that's the way you prefer to stay, but my belief, and the belief of everyone who has come on this delegation, is that cinema can be an instrument of change—that it is more important to the potential for any kind of future for our world than the pursuit of narrow regional or personal interests. What we need to agree on is a complete sea change in cultural attitudes. We're not here just to get your individual movies on the screen. We're here to address a huge audience in the United States, where what you say might make some real political and social impact. We're seeking an end to a situation where Russian and Georgian films are being shown at three o'clock in the morning on American television and being sold on video only to Georgian émigrés. We are trying to build up a global cinema."

Rezo Chkeidze had been quiet for some time—everyone had been quiet except Puttnam—and he responded with great intensity. "I quite agree that it is impossible to tolerate this state of things—Georgian films being screened at three o'clock in the morning," he began. "But your—shall we say—cruel realism disappoints me. When we speak of our love for the American cinema, we do not mean the thrillers—

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those empty films that draw big audiences. There are certain trends in literature and art"—Western literature and art, he seemed to mean—"that we know only too well. I have been present at commercial showings of Georgian films in the United States of America, and I have seen with my own eyes the success of those films with American viewers. I don't mean Georgian immigrants. I think maybe you are confused about that; there are no Georgian immigrants in America. Perhaps you have mixed us up with the Armenians." The audience laughed loudly.

"In your place," Chkeidze continued, "I would refuse all these receptions, parties, banquets, and so forth, and I would sit in a screening room and see five or six Georgian films, because you don't know anything about our cinema. We'd supply you with sandwiches and black coffee and everything you'd need."

With these words, he departed—from the stage and then from the hall. Puttnam, obviously shaken, stared after him for several seconds. "None of us flew twenty-eight hours to this country to offend anyone," he said at last. "We have been attempting, in a very short amount of time, to help you to understand something terribly important. Cinema in the Soviet Union is an art form—that's something all of us here understand and admire and envy. Cinema in the West is a business. Our job is to try to bridge the business attitudes of the West and the legitimate artistic attitudes that exist in this country, because unless we can do this, then, frankly, your films will be all but invisible in the West. Even 'Repentance,' which must strike you as an enormously successful film, has probably been seen in America by fewer than a hundred thousand people. I believe that instead of one 'Repentance' a year there should be five, and instead of a hundred thousand people there should be ten million. If you don't want that, though, or if you're not prepared to come halfway toward that, then everything we're trying to do is going to be in vain."

With Chkeidze gone, Georgy Shengelaya took over the role of spokesman for the Georgian filmmakers. "We're all for the collision with this businesslike attitude, but we're not quite agreed that all cinema in the West is purely commercial," he said. "Now I'm going to bring up a question that is on the mind of everyone here. There is a channel for making agreements with foreign companies—Sovinfilm—but Sovinfilm is in Moscow, and Georgia is far from Moscow. I live here, and I'm not in Moscow very often. I can't be busy looking for someone in some corridor in Moscow. If you can help us contact the right people—if you can make things happen—we will be grateful. Otherwise, we are wasting our time."

Igor Kokorev—a critic who had emerged as one of the leaders of the Filmmakers' Union—attempted to calm the atmosphere by summarizing certain steps that the summit delegates were in the process of taking. "Some twenty or thirty possible co-productions with the United States have been proposed," he said, "but right now they are going nowhere, because of problems such as living and eating arrangements for American actors and workers, which, however strange it may seem to you who have iron stomachs, are the main obstacles to co-production agreements. And I am glad to report that we have prepared four documents about the permanent conditions for co-productions."

"Forget these documents!" Georgy Shengelaya shouted. "Take one treatment and work it out!"

The meeting broke up on this unconciliatory note, but many of the participants soon reconvened for lunch in the union's dining room, where, finding a seat next to Georgy Shengelaya, I asked him about "Hadji Murad" and why it had been rejected by Goskino in 1963.

"Because the story involved a conflict between Christians and Muslims," he said. "They didn't want to see the Russians making trouble for Muslims, even if the story took place a hundred years ago."

It seemed to Georgy Shengelaya that "Hadji Murad" would make an ideal co-production, what with Tolstoy's name, the topicality of the subject matter (Islamic fundamentalism and "big powers putting pressure on small ones"), and the visual allure of the Caucasus Mountains, in which the story was set. "And I don't exclude the possibility of an American actor playing one of the main parts," he said. "Robert De Niro has Eastern features, I think. It's very interesting that he's never played a Muslim."

Lindsay Smith, a documentary producer who was working on a film about Soviet-American stereotyping, sat on Shengelaya's other side, and it fell to her to give him his first informed assessment of the prospects for "Hadji Murad" as a co-production. "Period dramas are a problem in Hollywood," she told him. "The best chance for this idea right now would be as a TV miniseries, like 'Peter the Great.' " Shengelaya winced, whether at the mention of television or of "Peter the Great" I could not be sure. "If you want to do a feature," Smith continued, "what every studio is looking for is a good contemporary action drama set in the Soviet Union. If you had one of those, I could pitch it tomorrow."

Shengelaya got a better reaction a few minutes later, when he laid out his plans for David Puttnam, who was at an adjacent table.

"How many major characters are there?" Puttnam asked him.

"Not many," Shengelaya said. "Besides Hadji Murad, there's the Imam and Nikolai, the Czar. They're the three big characters, and Nikolai doesn't have to be a Russian actor, because many of the czars were not Russian."

"Would you be prepared to trust someone else with the pacing of the English-language version?" Puttnam asked, in a tone that conveyed serious interest.

"I think so," Shengelaya said.

"This is a project we can discuss," Puttnam said.

That evening, while most of the Americans were attending a Georgian folk-dance concert, Shengelaya, Puttnam, and several Americans in the summit group sat in a screening room at Gruziafilm watching a film of Shengelaya's, "Journey of a Young Composer." It was set in the Georgia of czarist times, and told of a young man who goes from village to village

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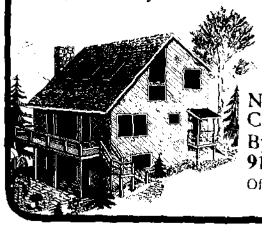

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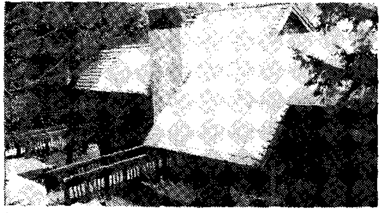

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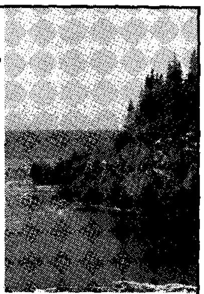

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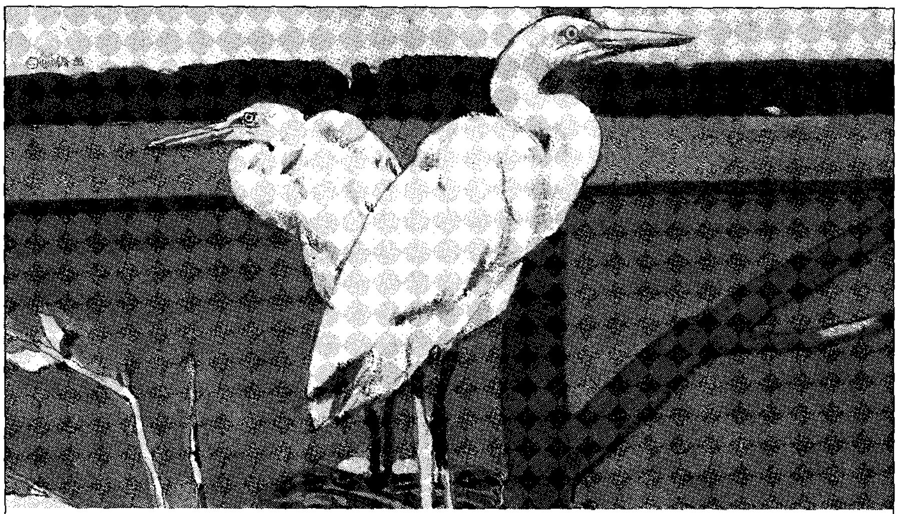

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in search of old folk melodies, with the police, close on his heels, arresting everyone who helps him. "Journey of a Young Composer" is an example of what the Soviets call a "sharp" film: the czarist police, Shengelaya told us after the screening, did not behave like the police in the story, so the film could be understood only as an allegory about the suppression of history and culture by the modern rulers of the Soviet Union. At the end of the film, the police are ordered to execute a group of prisoners, including the hero, but he slips out of their net, so they snatch up a passing peasant instead, in order to have the requisite number of bodies. This practice, Shengelaya said, was a recognizable technique of the police in Stalin's time.

In tone, "Journey of a Young Composer" is a dark, brooding piece of work—rather like its director. Georgian filmmakers frequently use amateurs in major roles and have professional actors dub the dialogue for them. Here the protagonist was played by a handsome but fairly stiff young man, of whom there were many long closeups, accompanied by the music of Gustav Mahler. A few of the Americans who were at the screening had to fight off sleep, and one conspicuously lost the battle, despite the director's presence a few chairs away. But David Puttnam sat hunched forward throughout, with his elbows on his knees, and when the screening was over he was not at a loss for words. "It's poetry," he said to Shengelaya, his arms outstretched in tribute. "You know, my favorite quality in Soviet and Hungarian and Czech films is your use of metaphor. It would be a great pity if, with *glasnost*, the Soviet cinema lost that gift—if everything began to be stated on the nose."

"FIRST the Russians came and told us how to make films. Now the Americans come and tell us how to make films." That was how the director Pavel Chukrai summed up the response of the Georgian filmmakers to David Puttnam's words of advice. Chukrai, who is the son of Grigori Chukrai, the director of "Clear Skies" and "The Ballad of a Soldier," describes himself as part Russian, part Ukrainian, part Cossack, and part Jewish—"so when I see old movies in which the Cossacks are attacking the Jews I don't know which side to root

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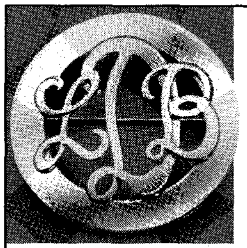
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for," he likes to say. He has thick dark hair, which he parts down the middle, a short, scruffy beard and mustache, a gentle smile, and observant eyes; and in the dungaree jacket that he wore through most of the summit he looked like a child of the sixties.

On our return to Moscow, he and his wife, Maria, who is a screenwriter, invited a group of us—Puttnam, me, my wife, and Barbara Coffman, who had overseen most of the administrative arrangements for the summit—to a late supper at their apartment, along with a screenwriter friend of the family, Grigori Gozin. "The Georgians came to the meeting ready to lose their virginity, but they imagined it in the abstract," Chukrai said as we nibbled at an assortment of *zakuski* (Russian hors d'oeuvres) and *pilmeni* (dumplings with sour cream and vinegar). "They have a genius of a young director. All his life he was a boxer and a hooligan, and suddenly, at the age of thirty-two, he made a film that was brilliant. I was talking to him yesterday, and he said, 'David Puttnam may be right, but if we do the things he tells us to do we will sacrifice our manhood, and maybe it is better not to make films at all.' "

"I understand," Puttnam said. "But in the end they'll only be making films for each other. When I teach film, I talk about two types of films—'or' films and 'and' films. The 'or' films are either commercial *or* artistic. In Britain, for a long time we were trapped in the idea that it was one thing or the other—that we had to make bad American movies that were purely entertainment or else serious, pseudo-Bergman films. We started turning out terrible, pale copies of American films—'mid-Atlantic films,' we called them. I'm afraid that Soviet filmmakers will get similarly trapped if they attempt to create a film industry that is completely dominated by the marketplace, as the American film industry is. There may be a middle course between the Burmatization of world cinema, in which each country pretends that the rest of the world doesn't exist, and a world cinema dominated by American entertainment values. If you want to know what the American film industry is like . . ." He pulled a small pamphlet from his pocket and flipped through it. "Elem Klimov said it wonderfully. He was writing about your cinema, but what he said describes Hollywood exactly." Puttnam began reading aloud: "Films more and more often began to pander to the philistine sentiments of a certain section of the film audience, supporting and strengthening these baleful trends in our society. The social and civic principles—a hallmark of Soviet films of the nineteen-fifties and the early nineteen-sixties—increasingly degenerated, as a result of numerous metamorphoses, into the image of 'needed' pictures. A whole cohort of filmmakers—more precisely, smart dealers in filmdom—made their appearance, ready to screen anything, so long as their films were commissioned, accepted without hindrance, and were well paid for. Hence, corruption, cronyism, obsequiousness to superiors, and other negative phenomena." He looked up. "That could be a description of Hollywood exactly," he said.

"This makes us closer," Chukrai said, with a smile.

"I was here for the Moscow Film Festival," Puttnam went on, "and I gave an interview with *Variety* in which I listed seven projects Columbia was doing in Eastern Europe. That's seven out of something like a hundred and sixty projects we had in development. I later heard that one of the directors of Coca-Cola said my problem was that I kept making deals with people nobody could pronounce the names of. He told me he was kidding, but I'm not so sure. I think it was one of the things that got me in trouble at Columbia—that threw up a question mark over my stability. They began to get the idea that I was into something they didn't understand—something that was a long way from mainstream cinema as they understood it. I feel bad saying this—but, basically, the American audience, the mass audience, has a built-in rejection of anything foreign. That story you gave me, for example"—Chukrai had written, and handed to Puttnam a few days earlier, a fanciful story about a Rambo-type American who crash-lands in Soviet territory and pretends to be a mute as he makes his way to Moscow—"is exactly the sort of thing the American studios are incapable of responding to. It would be impossible to sell that project to an American movie company, because the American studio system isn't built

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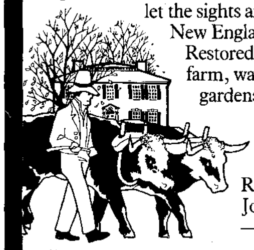

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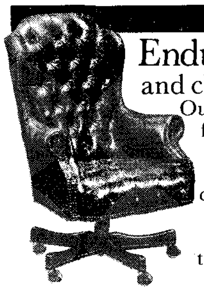

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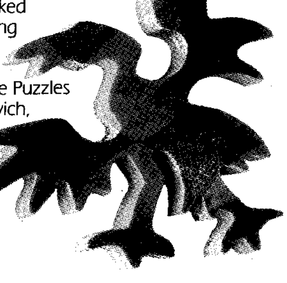

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around trusting creativity. In Hollywood, your film proposal would have to begin with a star. It couldn't start with you as a director. But if you could make the main character English I know of a company in England that might be interested. The people there would look at your work as a director, and on that basis they might decide they trust you."

"And if the hero is American they would not be interested?" Chukrai asked.

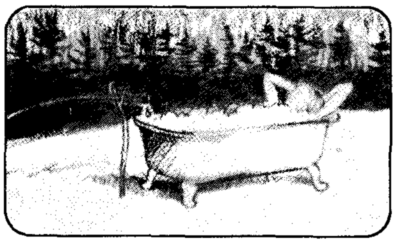
"The problem is, they can't afford a big American star," Puttnam said. "Let me get something off my chest. The reason I'm comfortable sitting here in your living room in Moscow is that I grew up in an age when films were being made by people like Rossellini, like Wyler, like Zinnemann, like your father—directors who communicated what was best about the human spirit. The films I like are intellectually stimulating, important, *and* entertaining. I despise artists who wish to appeal to a small roomful of people. It's a denial of the potential of film as a tool of communication. Cinema can do more for world peace, for ecology, for raising the intellectual horizons of people, than for me or you as individuals. For the next twenty years, I think, the role of the cinema artist is to fulfill the potential of the medium. Cinema has a job to do, and it's our generation's role to do that job. And if that means that we have to minimize ourselves as artists, internally, and maximize ourselves as communicators, so be it."

Chukrai followed Puttnam's words intently—in English, which he doesn't understand, and then in Russian, as my wife translated them. "Let us both pour our hearts out," he said. "Imagine that in the ancient world a talented poet was given an assignment: 'Write the Iliad.' Nothing would happen. It would come out a parody. When Wyler and Rossellini were working, there were certain social conditions that allowed them to make the films they did. In the sixties, Antonioni came on the scene, whose films I can't stand, but who expressed exactly what was happening in society at *that* time."

"Let me tell you about 'The Killing Fields,' " Puttnam said.

"A good film," Gozin, a tall, bearded, saturnine man, interjected.

"The first version was three hours long," Puttnam said. "It was wonderful! It had the whole complexity of the



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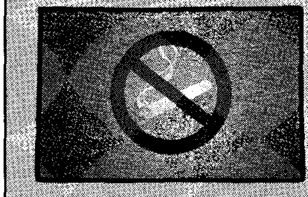

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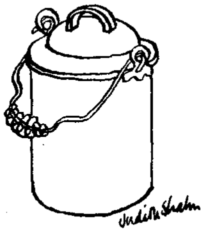
arrival of the Vietnamese in Cambodia, and the changes that occurred in the wake of that. It had the relationship between the reporter, Sydney Schanberg, and his father. It had a marvellous sequence of Schanberg going back to New York and the breakup of his marriage, because I was personally fascinated by the counterpoint of one man—Dith Pran, the Cambodian photographer—surviving the horrendous Cambodian experience, while the other is, in a sense, destroyed by it. But when we ran the three-hour version for an audience of three hundred people the sheer density of the information confused them, and by the last hour all but a hundred and twenty people had left the theatre. So we had a decision to make, the director and I—whether to make a wonderful film that nobody would see or to make some cuts. It was a painful decision, but we decided to cut, first from three hours to two hours and forty minutes, and then from two-forty we slowly chipped it down to two-thirty-two, and eventually it came in at, I think, two-nineteen. At the final preview, we had an audience that was able to grasp the film.”



“We have no previews here,” said Chukrai, “and sometimes I see a film on the screen and I understand that I should have cut it here or there, but by then it's too late. I think that Soviet films could benefit from previews. But in your film, I must say, there was a big piece that could have been cut without any harm—the whole sequence in New York.”

“If this goes on one more minute, I'll die!” Gozin declared, bounding up out of his chair. “I saw this film ‘The Killing Fields,’ and in the second half I said to myself, ‘Something is missing.’ Well, now I know what it is. Maybe if you had let yourself leave that piece in, the film would not have made as much money. But sometimes it is necessary to take risks. Sometimes after the passage of five or six years people understand that the risk was worth it. We had a director, Andrei Tarkovsky, who was criticized in his lifetime for not being a people's artist. Yet now everyone understands that Tarkovsky was a great director.”

Puttnam nodded. “But there's a great satisfaction when you've gone through this awful preview process,” he said. “For nine months, I went to Japan, to Europe, to Australia, and I watched ‘The Killing Fields’ in packed theatres. The nature of the audience was very satisfying. There were a lot of young people in Japan, for example, who would never have sat through the version that lasted three hours.”

“Maybe this is sheer Russian aristocratic thinking on my part,” Gozin replied. “There is a disdain for money that is in the very blood of Russian art. Pasternak said that to be famous is indecent. The desire to please is natural, but an artist has to be a little bit of an aristocrat. Tolstoy wanted to be commercial, so he wrote ‘Anna Karenina,’ a love story. But he also wrote the last chapters of ‘War and Peace,’ which are important even if nobody reads them.”

“Maybe you're not guilty of aristocratic thinking,” Puttnam said. “Maybe you're just reacting to fifty years of enforced proletarian art. In an environment where art is under attack—where it is told to be the servant of the people—it's normal for artists to fiercely protect their concept of what art should be. I don't know much about psychiatry, but I know that if you're crouched in a defensive posture you're not in the best position to see the landscape. Cinema is always propaganda.”

It was getting on toward two in the morning, and someone brought up the subject of sleep. Chukrai insisted on driving us back to our hotel, and when we had all bundled ourselves into his car he told a joke—an example, as he understood it, of English as opposed to American humor. It was about two parachutists: the first one jumps, and his chute opens on schedule; the other's chute fails, and, as he plummets by, the first man grabs him around the torso.

“Thank you!” the second parachutist exclaims.

“Cambridge?” asks the first.

The second shakes his head. “Oxford,” he says.

“Oxford? Sorry, sir,” says the first, opening his arms and letting the other man fall to his death.

Although the reaction was not all that Chukrai had hoped for, we were in a fairly mirthful mood when the car pulled up to the hotel where we were

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staying—a Stalinist-Gothic enormity known as the Ukraina. Still, the temperature was down around ten below zero, and nobody wanted to stay in the windswept parking lot any longer than necessary. So we said our goodbyes quickly and headed up the steps to the hotel entrance. As we did, Chukrai called out to Puttnam, in English, "Oxford? Sorry, sir," and sped off into the night.

AT the beginning of April, Elem Klimov came to the United States to spend several days as a guest of Robert Redford and his Sundance Institute, in Utah, followed by a week in Los Angeles, where he held a round of meetings with producers, directors, and studio officials; was the guest of honor at a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-plate "full-course Russian dinner" to raise money for more exchange programs involving Soviet and American filmmakers; and attended the Oscar ceremonies, as the first Soviet member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The day before the last of these events, I picked him up at the Bel Age Hotel, in West Hollywood, and drove him out to Malibu to visit Mark Gerzon and his family. It was a fine, comparatively smog-free day, and as we headed west on Sunset Boulevard I asked Klimov if he had any qualms about seeing the Soviet film industry become more like the American film industry.

"Of course," he answered. "The American cinema, even at its best, is horizontal. The Soviet cinema, at its best, is vertical. The horizontal cinema aims for a flat, superficial depiction of people and their lives. The vertical attempts to portray the higher spiritual life of human beings. It asks why people live. It touches on their godly beginnings, and not just on their superficial existence. This grows out of an ancient cultural tradition—a Russian tradition. Art looks upward, toward what separates man from beast."

It was early afternoon when we reached Gerzon's house, which sat on a steep bluff overlooking the Pacific. Only the likelihood that it might soon wind up *in* the Pacific, Gerzon assured us, had put it within the range of his pocketbook.

Gerzon, like Klimov, had come to the movie business with high expectations formed in a time of political ferment—in his case, the late sixties, when he was a student at Harvard. After college, he co-founded *WorldPaper*, a newspaper that brought together articles from many countries, and he wrote several books, the last of which, "A Choice of Heroes: The Changing Faces of American Manhood," argued for the need to unseat the "warrior hero" from his exalted perch in American popular culture, and to make room for the "mediator hero." Gerzon moved to Los Angeles, from Concord, Massachusetts, five years ago, in part to carry the message of that book into the heart of enemy territory. In another sense, though, the move reflected his disenchantment with the power of the printed word. He wanted to have an impact on the public perception of the Soviet Union and the arms race comparable to that of, say, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on the debate over slavery; to do so, he decided, he would have to write for the screen rather than the page. As a screenwriter and aspiring producer, he had managed to make a living working on film projects about such politically charged topics as South Africa and children's fear of nuclear war. After five years in Hollywood, however, he didn't have a completed film to show for his efforts. The Soviet Union, he could testify, wasn't the only place where a filmmaker could spend more time seeking a go-ahead than in fact going ahead.

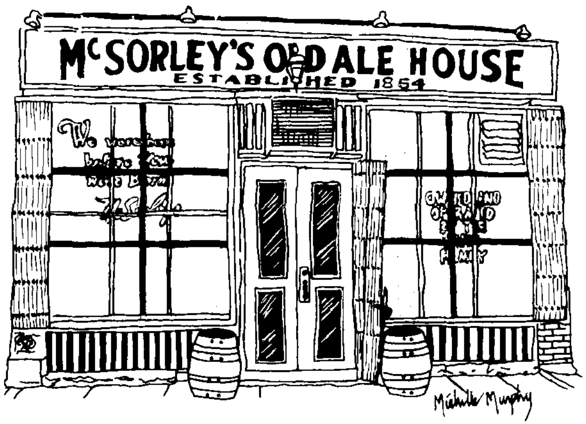
Since the end of 1986, Gerzon had been devoting more and more of his energies to citizen diplomacy. He had negotiated with the Soviets over such things as the arrangements for an evening of their films to be shown to members of the United States Congress and a roughly simultaneous evening of American films to be shown to members of the Supreme Soviet. He had negotiated with his Hollywood colleagues over such problems as one actress's refusal to go to Moscow unless her hairdresser's expenses (as well as her own) were paid. These labors had taken something out of him, and on his return from the second Entertainment Summit he had resigned from his post as president of the American-Soviet Film Initiative—an institution he had helped form—in order to, among other things, write a screenplay.

Klimov, too, was about to embark on an extended leave from his job as head of the Filmmakers' Union, in order to direct a film. For years, he had thought about doing an adaptation of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita," but now, he said, he was leaning toward an anti-Stalinist story, partly because he thought it might be more useful in the current political situation.

"So here we are—two ex-presidents," Klimov said.

After we had passed through Gerzon's house and into the back yard, Klimov took off his outer shirt and settled into a folding chair on the grass. "Anybody would be happy to work in a place like this," he said as he surveyed the view.

"I want to prepare you for the Oscars," Gerzon said, and he read aloud from a story in that morning's Los Angeles *Times* about why certain people would be at the ceremonies and certain other people wouldn't. David Puttnam would be teaching a film class in Toronto, the *Times* reported, without taking a stand on whether that fact should be interpreted as an expression of Puttnam's low regard for the Hollywood community. Redford would also be absent, but, as the *Times* article observed, "you rarely see some of the bigger stars, unless, of course, they are nominated or have something to sell or need a shot of High Visibility." The article noted that Paul Newman would be present, after failing to show up the previous year for—as it turned out—



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the best-actor award. "At the time of last year's ceremonies, Newman, who had been nominated five times for best actor and had never won, probably figured, oh no, not again," the *Times* article speculated. "Of course, last year he won. . . . So this year Newman will be on the program handing out an award. . . . It proves he has no grudge against the academy—as long as he can be present on his terms."

"Now that you are a member of the academy," Gerzon said to Klimov, "you have the opportunity in future years to make a statement by not coming to the Oscars."

Klimov, smiling, said he would certainly consider that option.

The following afternoon, a car and driver delivered Klimov, Gerzon, and Barbara Coffman to the Shrine Auditorium, the site of the Oscar ceremonies, and they stepped onto a red carpet bordered by symmetrical banks of bleachers. Klimov stood there for a minute, taking in the line of stretch limos, the TV trucks, the twenty-four-foot-high Oscars arrayed in front of the auditorium, the young actresses in their odd dresses, the older actresses in theirs, the crush of fans and photographers overhead, and, on a small stage at the far end of the walkway, Army Archerd, the veteran correspondent of *Daily Variety*. Then a security guard, evidently deciding that Klimov had lingered too long in a space that had to be kept open for the arrival of celebrities, gave him a helpful shove onto a path that had been set aside for non-celebrities. Cries of "Pee-wee! Pee-wee!" and "It's Pee-wee Herman!" suddenly rained down from the bleachers, and Klimov turned around to see a person he didn't recognize—a small and slight person, with slicked-down hair, who was dressed in, as it appeared, a thirty-year-old dinner jacket and a thin red bow tie—walking up the V.I.P. path, waving to his many fans and being summoned to the stage by Army Archerd. As Klimov and his party headed on into the auditorium, Pee-wee Herman began to speak.

—James Lardner

• •

NATURAL HISTORY

This happened back East, among exhibits,
years since we ended as *us*. I remembered you,
the waterless field work, and dissertations
too arid to publish; khaki tipped me,
or lines at the mouth.

Acknowledgment can go with real estate: low shrubs,
spiked life, and a mind of spoor in hardpan,
hunting prints or bones across tan tracts. I felt
neutral, confronting one I'd known, another dealer
in the past's job lots.

And yet, despite myself, not you I stopped—
one lean, in beige, and tanned. Nor was it
long since we split, a jigsaw less than epochal—
a mutual drift, I'd say, continental today. Coasts apart,
we argue in journals.

In most recognitions, I think, we must pay for what
strikes us; the last piece drops, doping us out.
Presque vu was not exactly empirical, a knowing's
tactile bits, but it did cost: I wouldn't call
to bare the *aperçu*.

I shall not further resolve this being two, and strange.
As those will, who cross paths in museums,
we drifted, and the vistas yawned, but I would ask
of the missing. Assembly, of course, is the crime
of omission—maybe the best one can do.

—Alex Stevens

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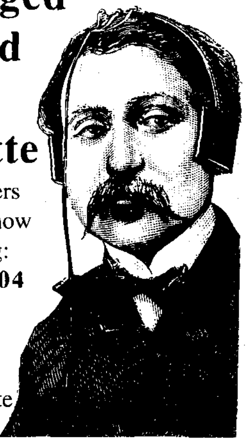

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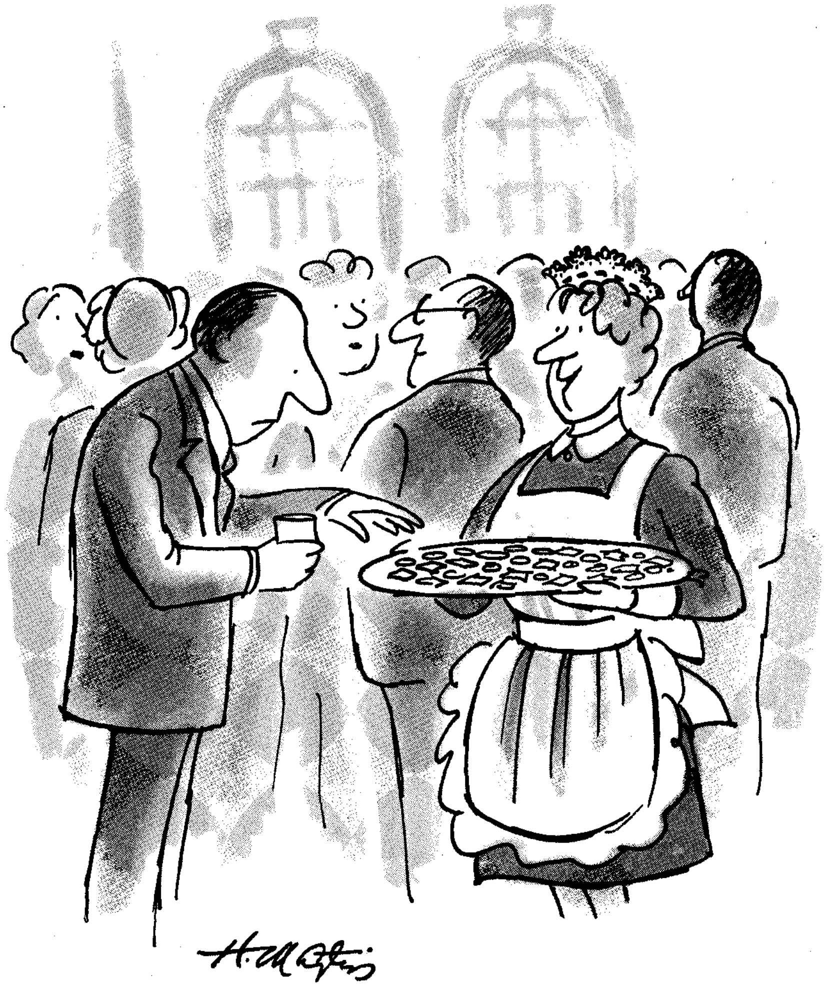
AROUND CITY HALL

THE ROMANTIC

LUCK is surely the most valuable of all political commodities, and, for most of his time at City Hall, Mayor Edward Koch has been one of the lucky ones. It has hardly ever rained on his parades. When bad things have happened in the city, New Yorkers have rarely seemed to blame him, instead giving him a nice laugh when he has said, "I'm just a little mayor from a little city on the Hudson," and told them it must be the fault of Washington, of Albany, of biological determinism. After corruption charges—and subsequent indictments and convictions—engulfed his City Hall friends and members of his administration, he was ready with the reminder that "corruption has been around since the beginning of the human race—and those two apes before it." When word got out that some years back he had sometimes referred to Ronald Dellums, the black congressman from California, as a "Zulu warrior," he got away with saying that that had, of course, been a compliment—Zulu warriors were recognized as Africa's noblest and bravest. And he had an explanation for why he seemed to be one of fortune's favored figures. At a guest appearance in a Harlem pulpit in 1985, he said of his election as mayor, "While it was the people who elected me, it was God that selected me." No large number of his constituents took public offense or showed signs of alarm at this demonstration of hubris on the part of their municipal leader. (Irrepressible Ed!) If you have been among the favored, it is particularly hard for you to get used to having nearly everything you do turn out wrong, which is the way things have been going for New York's Mayor lately. Understandably, he tends to think of these unwelcome developments as afflictions visited upon him by a higher authority. Last month, he said that he "felt like Job." And he also wondered aloud whether the time had come to ask when "they're going to send in the locusts."

Since there is a mayoral election next year, Koch's political fortunes and his state of mind are of increasing interest. Although politicians enjoy being the center of attention, the speculation about Koch's mental processes would not always make comforting listening for the squire of Gracie Mansion. Some believe that even his seemingly most erratic behavior—for example, his statement in July that the British troops in Northern Ireland were not an occupying army, followed, three days later, by the statement that an occupying army was exactly what they in fact were—is committed deliberately for some perceived political advantage. On the other hand, there are those who see him as rocketing from one impulsive, attention-getting project to another, rarely thinking any of them through. There is also open discussion lately of the possibility that at times the Mayor is out of touch with reality—paranoid, even—because of the effects of the August, 1987, medical episode that his doctors diagnosed as "a tiny, trivial stroke." After it happened, Marcia Kramer, City Hall bureau chief for the *Daily News*, consulted half a dozen neurological experts, who told her that strokes can, in fact, cause a collapse of the inhibiting element that keeps people who have not had strokes from saying and doing whatever comes into their minds. Other Koch watchers insist, however, that the Mayor's behavior has always been erratic but has just got more outrageous over the years—an example, perhaps, of a politician's growing in office.

No diagnosis of paranoia is involved in the Mayor's sense that the Reverend Jesse Jackson is no friend of his, although Koch—who during the Democratic Presidential primary here last April called Jackson a liar and someone whose election as President would cause the nation to be bankrupt and militarily defenseless in a few weeks' time—insists that he finds Jackson's hostility puzzling. It was for fear of a rerun of the Mayor's ugly April performance that the leaders of the Democratic Party, which has divisions enough, made sure he was not named a delegate to the Atlanta Convention. In



"The little square ones are egg and caviar. The little round ones are battery-operated watches from Hong Kong."

recent weeks, Jackson has been spending considerable time in New York, often in the company of local blacks who are laying plans for what they are determined will be a Koch defeat next year. The more immediate question for Koch has been the part he would be allowed to play in the Presidential campaign. The fact that Jackson's supporters are essential to a Dukakis victory has meant that Koch would be relegated to the sidelines—his least favorite seating assignment—unless he could achieve some rapprochement with Jackson. In July, the Mayor made a public offer to campaign "arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder" with the man he had so recently said represented a danger to the future of the nation. There was no response. Governor Mario Cuomo, however, is on good terms with Jackson. According to Cuomo, it was he who urged Jackson not to respond to the Mayor's savage attacks in the primary—a show of restraint that, he said later, caused Jackson to emerge from this phase of the campaign looking like a statesman, while Koch (the Governor did not say this, but others did) looked like a yenta. It was Cuomo who persuaded Jackson to take part in what was inevitably called a summit meeting, which took place in his World Trade Center office on August 31st.

If the Mayor was under any misapprehension that Jackson was ready to put the events of the primary out of his mind, it was dispelled the day before the summit. In a speech in Yonkers, where he addressed both sides in the battle over the building of low-income housing in middle-income neighborhoods, Jackson commented that the struggle against racism which had started in the South had now moved at full tilt to the New York area. He mentioned the Tawana Brawley case and "the subway shooting, the killing in Howard Beach, the Mayor of New York violating the spirit of our national campaign." On noon of that day, in an act truly hostile to Koch, Jackson paid a visit to the small band of homeless who have been sleeping on benches in City Hall Park since early June. An improvised tent they built for themselves was torn down by the Parks Department. Their presence a hundred yards or so from Koch's office is a particular affront, because it means that they have rejected the official city shelters, whose appointments, provided at great expense by the Koch administration, the Mayor frequently talks up and urges the homeless to make use of. Their excuse—and that of thousands of others who currently live on the city's streets and parks and in the subways—is that the shelters are too dangerous; indeed, they can cite a city report that says as much.

The popular theory inside City Hall is that the unwelcome visitors will surely disappear when the weather gets cold. However, for years there have been a few homeless who took refuge in that park at night. On the bright but very cold morning of January 1, 1986, for example, the police cleared five or six of them out in preparation for the formal ceremony at which Koch was to be sworn in for a third term. (The informal ceremony had been held at midnight the night before at the home of the Mayor's closest friend David Margolis, as had been true on his two previous inauguration days.) The big noonday celebration in 1986 was attended by twenty-five hundred invited guests who later were treated to a huge repast in the hundred-and-sixteen-year-old building just north of City Hall. Somebody thought it interesting to point out later that the building, which is now used for city offices, was originally the famous Tweed Courthouse, whose graft-ridden construction costs helped bring down Boss Tweed. Among those assigned prominent seats on the inaugural platform in front of City Hall that day were the Bronx Democratic boss Stanley Friedman, who has been brought back from the federal prison in Missouri where he is serving a twelve-year sentence on corruption charges, in order to go on trial here in state court on other city-corruption counts. Also sitting near the Mayor that day was Donald Manes, the Democratic boss of Queens, whose attempted suicide eight days after the inauguration (a second attempt, ten weeks later, was successful) was the signal that something was terribly wrong in New York City government. During his speech at the inauguration, Cuomo said that the Mayor now had in his grasp "a mandate unlike any other," and predicted that Koch would become New York's greatest mayor, because he would "accomplish the miracle of bringing us all together the way we have never been together before . . . the blacks, the whites, the people who are strong and people who have not yet had the opportunity to be strong." After the ceremony, Koch said a bit crossly that those lines in the Governor's speech were pointless, since he already had brought New Yorkers together—which, of course, is not the way Jesse Jackson has been describing local conditions during his recent turns around town.

YARD SALE
Westman

On the morning before the summit meeting in the Governor's office, Jackson had been making appearances in Brooklyn, and although there was a rumor that he might stop around in City Hall Park to see the homeless, no one, including the Mayor, was sure that this would happen. Shortly after noon, however, Koch got word that Jackson was in fact on his way there. Koch's usual lunch hour is twelve-thirty. Suddenly, reporters saw the figure of the Mayor coming rapidly down the front steps—though, he reminded them later, no more rapidly than he usually moves on his way to lunch. As soon as he and several aides had piled into his chauffeured car, it took off to the east, really zooming out of there. He missed by about one minute encountering Jesse Jackson, arriving in his limousine through the plaza's west entrance. The Mayor later described comments that he had raced off in order to avoid a confrontation with Jackson as "scurrilous rumor."

The limousine that Jackson rode in was driven by Percy Sutton, who was wearing a big smile. Sutton was the borough president of Manhattan from 1966 to 1977, when he was one of the losing candidates in the Democratic mayoral primary won by Koch. Since then, he has got quite rich in the cable-television business, and reporters noted that Jackson was being chauffeured about in a car with NYP—that is, press—license plates. His entourage included Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, who is the first black to hold that office since Sutton, and one of those being urged to take on Koch next year. Alerted to Jackson's possible visit, the homeless had increased in numbers to thirty or so; one of them had brought along a baby, and Jackson reached for the baby and held it high. Behind them were signs featuring his slogan from the Atlanta Convention: "Keep Hope Alive!" He assured them that "just because you're homeless doesn't mean you are helpless," and he reminded them that the Christ child was born in a stable to homeless people. "If you want politicians who will bring you honor, and not bring you shame, you must vote on it," he told them just before he left.

On August 31st, two hundred reporters waited in the Governor's conference room for two and a half hours while Cuomo, Jackson, and Koch held their summit meeting in the Governor's office. There were also twenty television cameras. (When members of the media in the communications center of the world cover an event, they don't fool around.) After the meeting ended, the three men took up their places in front of the press: Cuomo in the middle, Koch to his right, and Jackson to his left. The Governor and the Mayor had entered the room unaccompanied by any aides. Many prominent local blacks had strongly urged Jackson not to meet with Koch, saying that he would be bound to use the meeting to give himself some credibility with black voters in next year's campaign. Jackson brought with him four of the black leaders, including Dinkins and Manhattan Representative Charles Rangel—implicating them, in a sense, in the enterprise. Jackson stood ramrod straight and stony-faced, putting as much distance as possible between himself and the Mayor. City Hall regulars are familiar with the fact that, no matter who is speaking there, Koch leans his elbow on the podium, which bears the seal of the City of New York, and that he sometimes moves the elbow halfway across its top, impolitely obscuring the speaker. As Cuomo spoke after the summit meeting, describing plans for a voter-registration drive and a greater emphasis on an urban agenda in the national campaign, Koch struck a lounging stance, leaning on the Governor's podium, which bears the seal of the State of New York. At one point, he looked at his watch. As Jackson spoke, Koch leaned again. Nobody did any leaning as the Mayor spoke. He was effusive in his praise of Jackson's "generosity of spirit." He said that, as for himself, he was "just a little mayor from a little city on the Hudson," but the deputy mayors and other aides who lead the appreciative response to his japes at City Hall were nowhere in sight, so nobody laughed.

During the press conference, the Mayor mentioned that he had promised not to use any pictures of himself with Jackson in next year's mayoral campaign. According to some reports, Jackson had said that unless Koch agreed to this he would not attend the press conference. Two days later, the Mayor would say that his promise about not using such pictures had been "a joke." While he was taking his turn speaking at the podium after the summit meeting, he suddenly reached over and shook hands with Jackson. Jackson could have pulled back and made a scene—as the anger on the faces of some of his companions made it clear they thought was appropriate—but he did not. Rangel said later that the Mayor's action had been "a very crummy thing to do." The front page of *Newsday* the following day showed the handshake—Koch's fingers firm and pushy, Jackson's hanging unresponsive and loose, but not pulling away. Writing in that paper, Dennis Duggan called it "a tiny, trivial handshake." Writing in the *News*, Mike McAlary was reminded that the Mayor had recently urged New Yorkers not to give to street beggars ("Just say no. If you feel guilty, consult a priest"), and now there was his hand "hanging out there, beggarlike, in front of Jesse Jackson," who rescued it, said McAlary, as "an act of charity." Rangel commented that anyhow Koch was "mentally and politically crippled," which most Koch watchers thought was probably overstating the case. In a column written for the *City Tribune*, which is published by allies of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church—one of six columns that the Mayor, with the help of some members of his staff, writes each week—Koch defined a handshake

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as "simply a social grace." He said that McAlary's having described his hand as "beggarlike" had been unforgivable and unforgettable and that on that account he could never shake McAlary's hand again—not that, as it happened, the *News* columnist had ever sought a mayoral handshake, tiny, trivial, or otherwise.

LATE last month, the subject of Alistair Cooke's weekly BBC radio address was this city and its mayor. Before getting down to some of the grungier aspects of New York life, Cooke spoke of having passed Eighty-eighth Street and East End Avenue a day or two earlier and having caught a glimpse of Gracie Mansion "bristling like a mirage among the trees," and he recalled with pleasure having, a few years before, been a guest at "the Mayor of New York's graceful Colonial house that sits in a little park on the edge of the East River." To many Americans, Cooke is most familiar as the commentator on "Upstairs, Downstairs." One could imagine that, after his extended exposure to the remoteness of the grand folks upstairs at Eaton Place from the happenings belowstairs, Cooke had not been surprised to learn from news accounts a few weeks earlier that the Mayor had said he hadn't had the slightest idea that Mitchel London, his chef for the past seven years, had from time to time made use of the Mansion's equipment and staff as adjuncts to his seven-year-old private catering business. A report last month of the city's Department of Investigation had been undertaken after the appearance of several articles by Lucette Lagnado in the *Post*, describing what seemed to be a conflict of interest belowstairs at Gracie Mansion. The department has concluded that the Mayor's chef, whose salary was fifty-one thousand five hundred and forty dollars a year, had on occasion used the kitchen there (and city-funded ingredients) to prepare his company's specialty, cheesecake. He had ordered city employees to help with the baking, and had had city vehicles deliver the products to clients around town, some of whom were venders eager to continue receiving contracts to provide groceries for the Mansion.

Koch, who is famously preoccupied with food, responded to the report by describing London as "a superb cook." He offered to provide anyone who wrote to him with the chef's recipe for zucchini, garlic, and onions. Although London had "made mistakes," the Mayor was, he indicated, willing to forgive and forget; after all, superb cooks are hard to find. However, London would have to get out of the catering business if he stayed on as chef. The serious fault, the Mayor said, lay with "those of us in government" who had allowed London to run a business on the side when it was inevitable that "an ethical consideration" would arise. After the ultimatum, London opted for the private sector. The D.O.I. report had been sent to Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who said that there were no grounds for criminal prosecution. Peter Hirsch, a local lawyer, has nevertheless filed suit to force the Mayor—who, he says, had an obligation to know what was going on in his official residence—to recover for the city treasury the value of all city assets used in London's catering business plus any profits derived from such misuses, a sum that some thought could run to five or six figures.

In a plot turn that might have interested television-series writers, it turned out that London's financial backer had been the Mayor's friend David Margolis. Margolis helped London out as "sort of a Good Samaritan," Koch told the press, and certainly not out of an interest in making money (or in keeping track of a catering business's relationship to the Gracie Mansion kitchen): Margolis is chairman, president, and chief executive officer of Colt Industries. The two men have been friends for about twenty years. Margolis—with his wife, Barbara, who is the head of the Mayor's Commission for Protocol and a member of the city's Board of Correction, which advises Koch on prison matters—has accompanied Koch on a number of his foreign trips, and the Mayor spends occasional summer weekends at the Margolises' beach house in the Hamptons. He was there for the first weekend of this month, having declined to take part in the annual Labor Day parade. The press here has occasionally brought up the matter of the close association of Koch and Margolis, in view of Margolis's business interests. A reporter for a local daily once asked the Mayor why he spent so much time with the head of Colt Industries, since he took such a strong position against guns: in 1980, he successfully pushed for a state bill that imposed a year's jail sentence on anyone whose sole offense was the possession of an illegal gun. "That was a stupid question" was Koch's answer to the reporter. Later, he explained in reasonable tones that just because you're friends with people doesn't mean that you have to agree with them on every single subject.

TROPICAL FISH
6

The Mayor's decision to spend this month's holiday with the Margolises rather than march in the Labor Day parade (though he arranged to be helicoptered back in time to take part in the annual parade of Brooklyn's Caribbean community, three and a half hours later) raised another question. Skipping the annual celebration of the local labor movement—whose principal sponsors were leaders of the city employees' unions—was one thing, William Murphy, *Newsday's* City Hall bureau chief, wrote before the event, but it would surely be taken as an affront for him to pass the time instead with the head of Colt Industries, which for nearly three years has been locked in a bitter strike with a local of the United Automobile Workers in Hartford. At one point, the strikers, desperate to dramatize their plight, carried a coffin through New York's streets and set it up in front of Margolis's Park Avenue office. A sad, rather elderly band, they sometimes mention that Margolis, whose company refused to take them back even on the basis of no raise at all, received a seven-hundred-and-fifty-nine-thousand-dollar *bonus* for 1987. Murphy wrote that the Mayor's decision on where he would spend Labor Day was "tantamount to passing up a rally to help the homeless because you want to officiate at the opening of a new luxury apartment building—the injured party is going to

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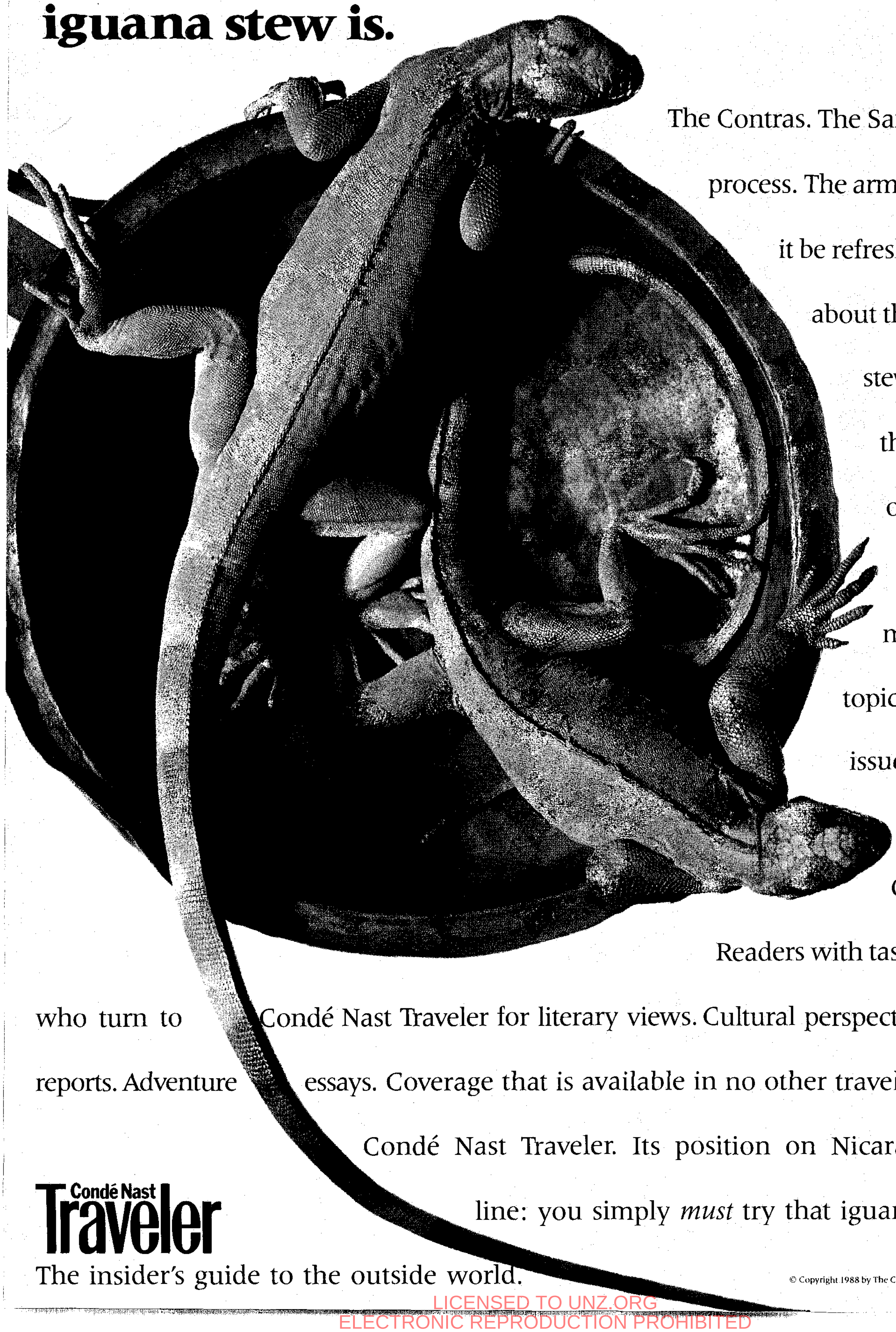

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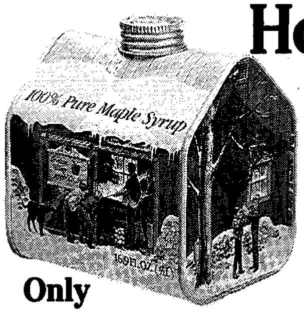
draw a conclusion about which side you're on."

THE Mayor was also in the Hamptons with the Margolises during the first weekend of last month. It was on the night of Saturday, August 6th, in Tompkins Square Park, on the Lower East Side, that there was the now celebrated clash between local police and a band of homeless people, drug users, members of skinhead political groups, street musicians, and what Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward later described as "rich kids come in from Scarsdale"—that is, the new hippies—who were in the habit of spending at least part of the night in the park. The bloody melee began as the police got ready to impose a 1 A.M. curfew. Although objects were certainly thrown at the cops, whose numbers, including mounted police, eventually came to four hundred and fifty, the official Police Department report, issued a couple of weeks later, made no pretense that the provocation should have caused, as it did, fifty-two people to be taken to hospitals. The police actions, the report said, were "not well-planned, staffed, supervised, or executed" and had resulted in confrontation "which culminated in a riot." The report referred to the "appalling behavior of some members of the department," and added that because the events had been videotaped by two civilian observers who happened to have been carrying video cameras "most residents of this city have witnessed police officers striking demonstrators with nightsticks and kicking other apparently defenseless people while they were lying on the ground." The tapes also showed that several of the club-wielding officers had covered their shield numbers (and one had simply removed his shield). "What does he have in mind when he covers his shield?" Commissioner Ward asked, referring to such an officer, at an August 29th department ceremony. "Is he planning to do something that he doesn't want to be recognized for afterward?" One of the superior officers who were in charge on the night of the riot announced his retirement; another was shifted from Manhattan's Midtown South precinct to "an undisclosed location in Queens." The department's Civilian Complaint Review Board braced itself to hear more than a hundred allegations of police brutality at the park that night, and District Attorney Morgenthau empanelled a grand jury to consider whether indictments should be filed against specific cops.

Despite Koch's reputation as a hands-on mayor, known for rushing to the scene whenever there are reports of serious violence in the city, he was not informed of the events in Tompkins Square Park until two o'clock the next afternoon, when he was flown back to town by police helicopter in time for the start of the Dominican Day parade. (With the election looming ahead, the Mayor will be taking special pains not to miss any significant Hispanic or black celebrations: it was local blacks and Hispanics who, deeply angered by his attacks last April on Jesse Jackson, cast most of the votes that carried the city for the Chicago minister.) His being kept out of the loop, as it were, on the night of the Tompkins Square riot was apparently the result of simple inadvertence rather than a sense that the Mayor's presence hasn't always served as a calming influence lately.

In the past, the response at the Koch City Hall to accusations of police brutality was—as at most city halls—protective of the department. The cops, it was explained, were merely carrying out their assigned duties. Reports of offenses were often dismissed as anecdotal or as based on unsubstantiated rumors, and complainants were accused of being misguided or of having "their own political agenda"—a favorite mayoral phrase, implying that the Mayor doesn't have *his* own political agenda. The largest share of brutality complaints come from the minority community, and many people here believe that what minorities see as imperviousness to their concerns by the white establishment explains why a considerable number of blacks, unlike most whites, give a degree of respectful attention to the message of the advisers of Tawana Brawley: there is no justice in the white criminal-justice system for members of minority groups. That attention continues, although no evidence has been offered to support the black teen-ager's claims that, late last year, she was repeatedly raped by six white men, including a policeman, and although the most recognizable of the advisers, the tubby, bushy-haired Reverend Al Sharpton—whom the Mayor refers to as "the Reverend Charlatan"—has been discredited in numerous ways. Koch's first reaction to reports of the clash in Tompkins Square followed the usual line: it had been an understandable police response to extreme provocation. However, after he saw the videotapes, which had been made available to local television stations, he was, for the first time in his nearly eleven years in office, strongly critical of members of his Police Department, saying that they had been "out of control." Early this month, he spoke at a convention of members of the Police Benevolent Association with whom he has been a big favorite. When he told them they would be expected to operate "within the rules," someone in the audience heckled him, and his response was what he described as "an obscene gesture"—one that involved a bent elbow and an upraised fist. "You're taking all the fun out of it," someone called out.

Law-enforcement agencies, including those here, have routinely used videotapes to build up evidence against lawbreakers or, in some cases, merely people they see as lawbreaking types. Now it was the cops who had been caught in the electronic net. Still, it seemed that some of them might escape the net, thanks to the qualms of one of the videotapers, who, unlike the other, refused to obey a court order to turn the tapes over to the grand jury. This videotaper, Clayton Patterson, who, with his wife, runs a hat store on Essex Street, and who has been active in the neighborhood effort to drive the drug dealers out of the Tompkins Square area, had first hired as his lawyer Alton Maddox, one of the Brawley-family advisers. Later, Patterson dismissed him, pointing out that Maddox had held press conferences suggesting that the brutality at Tompkins Square was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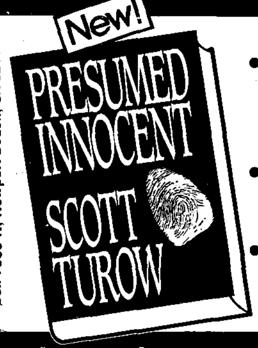

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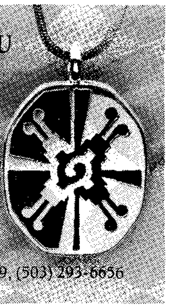
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an aspect of the Brawley case, as it surely was not. For one thing, although Patterson did not dwell on it, in the August 6th confrontation nearly everyone involved—the cops; the park's night occupants; the neighbors who had sought the curfew in the hope of getting more sleep but were then alarmed by the violence of the police in enforcing it; and, for that matter, the two men with video cameras—was white. After the harsh Police Department report on the park melee, some black leaders observed wryly that it wasn't until the cops were caught beating the hell out of white folks that anyone got excited in this town.

Patterson's reason for declining to turn over his four hours of tapes to the grand jury was that he didn't trust Morgenthau. He said that the District Attorney was too close to the police and would not prosecute them. The judge told Patterson that if he withheld the tape from the grand jury he would have to serve at least sixty days in the Men's House of Detention in the Bronx. (After he had served a week there, the judge freed him temporarily, saying he should take time to think things over.) Before being led off in handcuffs to the Bronx jail, Patterson made a statement to the court. "It is wrong for the police to beat up and maim and kill people," he said. "It's wrong for the drug dealers never to go to jail. . . . It's wrong for the Mayor to separate himself from his constituents. It's wrong for the District Attorney never to effectively prosecute the police, and it's wrong to have blocks of empty buildings and the streets filled with homeless people." He then held up his hands, showing that on one palm he had written in large letters "DUMP" and, on the other, "KOCH."

Several British papers carried accounts of the Tompkins Square riot—bad news about New York is welcome almost everywhere—but none, presumably, went so far as to report in full Patterson's departing comments, so that Britons could compare his view of the Mayor and the current state of the city with that offered by Alistair Cooke on the BBC a week earlier. Koch's day, Cooke noted, "starts at dawn and is lucky to end at midnight"—a circumstance that would explain why he might not always know what was going on in his kitchen. "The unreal, the incredible thing is: he wants to run again," Cooke told his BBC listeners. "Why would he want a shot at another four years? Because I think, after all the wear and tear of trying to take care of seven million people, he remains an irrepressible romantic, who has had the tonic experience of sometimes seeing romance turn into reality."

THE events of the Labor Day weekend suggest that next year's reëlection campaign of the irrepressible romantic—a campaign that has already started, of course—may be a rough one. The questions about Koch's judgment in skipping the big union parade so that he could spend the weekend at the beach with a rank union buster—which is how labor leaders regard Margolis—wasn't the only thing that went wrong for the Mayor on Labor Day. Under the impression that he hadn't been invited to march, he had announced that anyhow the parade was "a very poorly attended affair." Its sponsor, Thomas Van Arsdale, the president of the New York City A.F.L.-C.I.O. Central Labor Council, pointed out that Koch had rejected an invitation to march at the head of the parade, and added that anyhow "we don't think of Mayor Koch as a great friend of the labor union movement." In fact, the parade had one of the biggest turnouts in its history. Governor Cuomo was on hand, and so was Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan—and Jesse Jackson. From a special reviewing stand in front of St. Patrick's, the Mayor's good friend John Cardinal O'Connor delivered a homily saying, "All of us are at times tempted to exploit others—it is part of the weakness of human nature." And so, he said, "I dread what would happen if the notion of the union was forgotten."

The Mayor did not renege on the invitation to attend the day's big event in Brooklyn, the annual West Indian Day parade—that is, the festival of local blacks from the Caribbean. The political support of this group is no small prize. Because of its presence, Brooklyn has been described as the largest Caribbean city in the world. The police estimated attendance that afternoon at nine hundred and fifty thousand. "BOOS RAIN ON KOCH'S PARADE" was the headline in the *News* the next day. The Mayor arrived at about two-thirty, in a police helicopter, which landed behind the Brooklyn Museum. As he climbed out, he handed one of his aides a copy of Tom

Wolfe's "Bonfire of the Vanities," which he had apparently been reading on the trip in from the Hamptons. Once again, he had narrowly missed an encounter with Jesse Jackson, who had left ten minutes earlier, after a wildly applauded twenty-minute speech in which he urged the crowd to register to vote, so that they could make a change next year at City Hall. When Koch reached the reviewing stand, across from the Museum, the Reverend Al Sharpton was standing nearby. As the Mayor read a proclamation in honor of the parade, he could hardly be heard over the booing. One voice in the crowd shouted "You disrespected Jesse!" and another, "Run, dog, run!" A large sign read "DUMP KOCH THE RACIST." Koch blamed the Reverend Sharpton for the poor reception, and the booing turned even more menacing. Also on hand was Republican Representative Guy Molinari, whose district includes Staten Island and a small area of Brooklyn. The previous week, Koch had called Molinari, with whom he is on bad terms, "irrational" and "the most demagogic person I've ever met." Molinari told reporters at the parade scene that Koch was "absolutely paranoid" if he thought that Sharpton was responsible for the booing. "There are a lot of people here who don't like him," he said of the Mayor. Five minutes after he arrived, Koch had left for the helicopter ride back to Manhattan. Before the Mayor took off, Mark Mooney, a *Post* reporter, mentioned to him the interesting coincidence that the reading material Koch had brought with him began with a scene in which a fictional mayor of New York is driven from a public meeting by a crowd of blacks stirred up by a black minister. "The difference was that in the book the mayor *ran away*," Koch told him. However, the flying wedge of city policemen who hustled Koch away from the reviewing stand had in fact moved very fast and, some observers thought, had seemed to have his safety in mind. At City Hall a few days later, the Mayor again blamed Sharpton for the bad scene at the Caribbean parade. Pointing out that he himself did not engage in "vile rhetoric or lack of acceptable civility," he said, "The public will not accept what these demagogues are doing out there," and he assured his listeners, "Civility is coming back."

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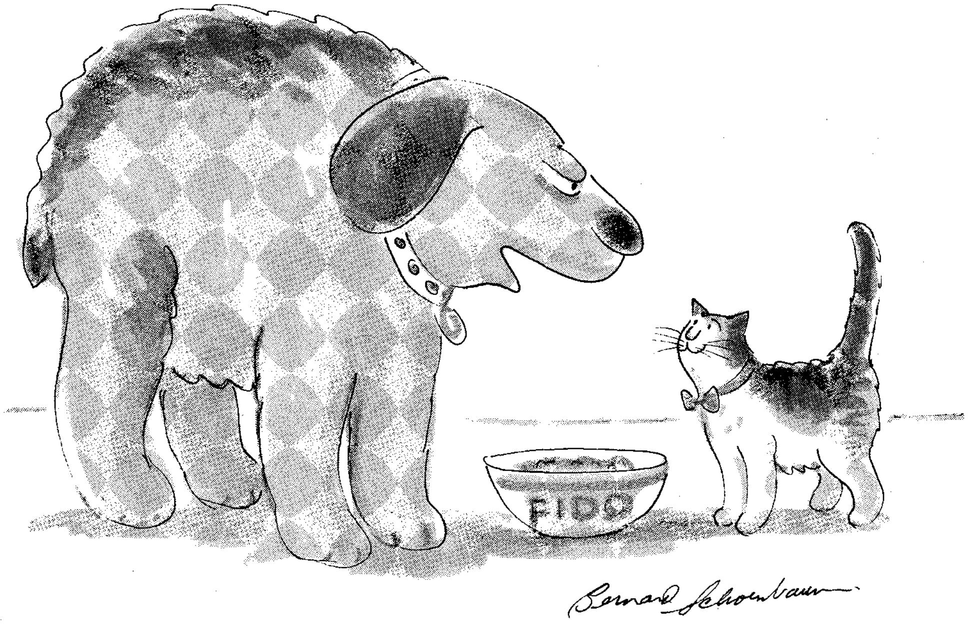
BOOKS

Self-Watcher

"THE best things shimmer with fear," says David Ferrie, one of the many dangerous American brooders whose voices echo in Don DeLillo's novel "Libra" (Viking; $19.95), about the life of Lee Harvey Oswald and the assassination of John Kennedy. Statements like Ferrie's come at us from all directions. In this book of loners and conspirators, everyone is an artist of paranoia, defending himself against the chaos of the world by firing words, ideas, and bullets at it in elaborate patterns, and DeLillo's novel is like a stop-motion frame of the crossfire, a still picture of an awful moment, in which the deadly trajectories have a seductive clarity, and even, shockingly, a kind of beauty—we're almost dazzled enough to take it all as truth. But it isn't truth, of course. DeLillo says, in a note at the end of the book, that his work "makes no claim to literal truth," that "it is only itself, apart and complete." What we mistake for truth in "Libra" is only the shimmer of a fear that has been hoarded, cared for, lovingly developed, polished with a fetishist's single-minded devotion. "Libra" isn't for assassination buffs, though in some strange way it's about them. It is, like all DeLillo's novels, about how we nurture and stroke our dreads in solitude and then, with ferocious intensity, project them into the world. It's his best novel, because it goes right to the source—to Dallas in November, 1963, the primal scene of American paranoia.

The thrill of reading "Libra" is at least partly illegitimate: we're startled, and disturbed, at taking such keen aesthetic pleasure in this terrible story, at watching ourselves submit so helplessly to the grip of DeLillo's feverish reverie. The novel leaves us feeling spooked, and vaguely guilty over our enjoyment of it, and thus identifies us both with DeLillo, the self-spooked author of this fantasy history, and with the character he has invented as the author of the assassination plot. This is a semi-retired C.I.A. man named Win Everett, a kind of intelligence-community visionary: he dreams up a scheme to fake an attempt on the President's life—"a surgical miss"—whose artfully constructed trail would lead investigators back to the object of his own private fears and obsessions, Fidel Castro. Everett, according to DeLillo, intends to conjure an assassin out of the thin air of his own mind: "He would script a gunman out of ordinary dog-eared paper, the contents of a wallet." He and his fellow-conspirator, an Agency man named Parmenter (disgraced, like him, by the failure of the Bay of Pigs operation), want their shooter to be only "a name, a face, a bodily frame they might use to extend their fiction into the world." Everett's sense of his mission, his view of the true meaning of intelligence work, verges on the mystical. He says, "Secrets are an exalted state, almost a dream state. They're a way of arresting motion, stopping the world so we can see ourselves in it." He believes that "our lives, examined carefully in all their affinities and links, abound with suggestive meaning, with themes and involute turnings we have not allowed ourselves to see completely."

Win Everett is a frightening man, a quiet monster of inwardness, and his creator understands him scarily well. DeLillo's prose has—has always had—a quality of demented lyricism, a tendency to trance out on mystery, hidden meanings, intimations that someone is coding our experience in ways we aren't meant to crack. His home turf is a realm of indeterminacy, unknowability, half-apprehension, a nightmarish connectedness that either is showing us the way things really are or is simply a shimmering mirage, just another deceptively suggestive metaphor. When he's in this territory, his sentences sing with an epic vagueness: "We were all linked in a vast and rhythmic coincidence, a daisy chain of rumor, suspicion and secret wish." And even when he's not, when he's describing what history has recorded for us, he seems most interested in capturing the blurs and shadows of events, the moment when the evidence of the senses is at its most tenuous and most contradictory, when it's closest to the beautiful abstractions of memory: "There were people backed against building walls who could not see the limousine but only figures gliding by, spirits of the bright air, dreamlike and serene." It's not difficult to imagine DeLillo working himself into raptures of ambiguity as he writes these brilliantly vaporous passages. The cloud of confusion surrounding the Kennedy assassination seems to inspire him even more than the toxic cloud that was the central metaphor of his previous novel, "White Noise." The writing in "Libra" is enthralled, as weirdly eroticized as prisoners' poetry. The ghostly figures that glide through these pages seem the products of a consciousness drifting toward the ecstatic, inducing visions as a form of self-stimulation:



"Don't get cute with me."

the grave, solitary play of the confined.

This is the kind of consciousness that Win Everett has: he's turned on by playing with phantoms and flirting with danger. And his project is to create a reality, apart and complete in itself, whose ambiguity is bottomless—a plot in which fiction and fact mate unnaturally and make a creature that devours the minds of those who gaze on it. The hero he wants for his story is to be "a self-watcher, a man who lives in random space"—a man, that is, much like him, a man sitting in a room and thinking and waiting, dreaming the convergence of his vivid private world and the hazy, threatening world outside. "There is a world inside the world" is a refrain that runs through "Libra." At times, this seems to be DeLillo's credo; at times, we believe it ourselves. But DeLillo is aware, as Everett isn't, of the perils of becoming carried away by visions of worlds inside worlds; he might almost have written this novel to exorcise his own tendency toward paranoid mysticism, to take a clear look at the nature of the thrill he gets from conspiracy. In isolation, Everett's plot is beautiful, elegant; escaped from his mind, running loose in the world, it's a catastrophe. One of the renegade Bay of Pigs veterans who take part in carrying it out says to himself: "Everett's obsession was scattered in technique. The plan grew too twisty and deep. Everett wanted mazes that extended to infinity. The plan was anxious, self-absorbed. It lacked the full heat of feeling." This sounds like a description of one of DeLillo's earlier books—"Running Dog," perhaps, or "Players." (Several of those books, in fact, now seem like near-misses on the themes of "Libra": both explicit references to and subtle suggestions of the mythology of the Kennedy assassination are scattered through them, as if DeLillo wanted to deepen the resonance of his invented plots with dark whispers of a real one.) The people who carry out Everett's hermetically perfect plot more than compensate for its chilliness. They have feeling to burn; they intend to make this shadow play real—to shoot to kill, not just to confuse. They have too much reality, too much life, themselves to fit comfortably into Everett's mazy, solipsistic plan; and their unpredictability enriches DeLillo's work too—rescues it from self-absorption. In "Libra" he's a self-watcher in the process of transcending himself.

DeLillo manages to break out of the conspiracy junkie's cell by constructing what seems to be an unusually complex arrangement of mirrors: there's never only one angle on events, always another eye drawing a bead. While Everett, Parmenter, and the other disgruntled spooks (all characters invented by DeLillo) are refining their secret designs, illuminating the sacred text of their conspiracy, the life of Lee Oswald is being laid out for us in a kind of mocking, parodic counterpoint. He's as paranoid as they are, but his madness lacks the pure, ascetic, aestheticized dimension of theirs; it's messy, incoherent, needy, a state of mind created not by a runaway sense of empowerment but by squalor and oppressive enforced loneliness. "His space," DeLillo tells us, "had been nothing but wandering, a lie that concealed small rooms, TV, his mother's voice never-ending." Oswald thinks of himself as "a zero in the system," feels at peace only when he's riding the subway in New York ("this inner power, rising to a shriek, this secret force of the soul"), and caroms like a pinball from one home to another, from one set of beliefs to their opposite. DeLillo tracks Oswald through all his small rooms—from the ones where as an adolescent he sits alone, reading about Communism and imagining himself borne along on that great tide of history, to a cell in a military brig, to hotel rooms in Moscow where he's confined after his defection, to a crummy house in New Orleans, to the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, and to yet another cell, in the Dallas Police and Courts Building. Oswald's is a life that refuses to make sense, in part because he's obsessed with self-definition: he's constantly, restlessly searching for a system he isn't a zero in, for a context to explain, and enlarge, him. The horrible joke of "Libra" is that this random particle named Lee Oswald attaches itself to the grand structure of the intelligence mandarins' plan. He appears out of nowhere, as the living confirmation of a theory, the embodiment of Everett's abstractions. Ferrie (who really existed), a right-wing lunatic who helps recruit Oswald in New Orleans, tells him, "You're a quirk of history. You're a coincidence. They devise a plan, you fit it perfectly." And Oswald was born under the sign of Libra, the

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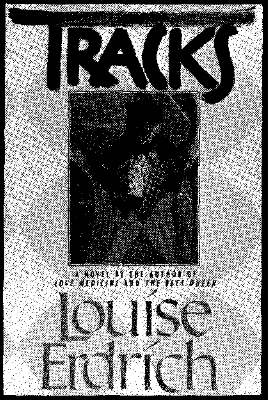

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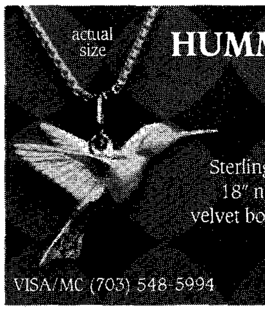

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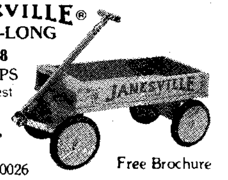

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scales, which makes him "somewhat unsteady and impulsive . . . easily influenced," according to one of Ferrie's cronies. "Poised to make the dangerous leap."

DeLillo's portrait of Oswald is unexpectedly touching. It's what gives "Libra" the full heat of feeling. We sense in it (as we do in Conrad's "The Secret Agent") the intensity of the writer's belief that he can illuminate the world by striking match after match at its dark margins. For the first time, DeLillo's work has the incendiary concentration of great fiction: his writing about Oswald is a long fuse that seems to lead straight to the heart of things. DeLillo uses Oswald's miserable story to show us a kind of American life that can't be imagined by lofty manipulators like Everett and Parmenter (who think of themselves as "alone in a room that was itself alone, a room that hung above the world")—a life of pain and degradation and aching alienation, a life in which paranoia is visceral, not intellectual, and resolves itself in violence. Everett's plan goes wrong (and the novel goes right) because Oswald, and his mother, and Ferrie, and Jack Ruby were *real*, and ultimately unassimilable by even the most sophisticated paranoid art. They're too volatile to be simply used: the behavior of the newly discovered particles is unpredictable, and everything blows up, and real people die, and something toxic is released and spreads indiscriminately, uncontrollably, without mind.

There's another line of development in "Libra," alongside the progress of the assassination and the sordid biography of the assassin, and this line has a cautionary tone. DeLillo has created, as an instrument of self-reflection, an investigator named Nicholas Branch, a retired C.I.A. man who has been hired to "write the secret history of the assassination." Inundated with data (sent to him by someone known as the Curator), Branch sits alone in a "room of dreams, the room where it has taken him all these years to learn that his subject is not politics or violent crime but men in small rooms." The description links him with that other solitary dreamer, Everett, and also with DeLillo, the brooding writer, the man who's trying to make all the right connections, to find the pattern in the chaos of crude facts and refined deceptions. Branch's project, and DeLillo's, is a constant struggle against the seductions of solitude: the temptation to wipe out the mess of traumatic experience by the pure exercise of intellect, to abstract everything in a grand and perfect metaphor, something that can be held in the mind, apart and complete. Branch's investigation—itself a metaphor for our shifting reactions to the assassination over the past twenty-five years—takes him through despair, solipsism, poetic reverie, deep paranoia, sorrowful anger at his own limitations: his method is a kind of creative drift, an unfocussed receptivity. At one point, the Curator sends him "an actual warped bullet that has been fired for test purposes through the wrist of a seated cadaver," and Branch is jolted. He thinks, "They want me to *touch* and *smell*. . . . They are saying, 'Look, touch, this is the true nature of the event. Not your beautiful ambiguities, your lives of the major players, your compassions and sadnesses. Not your roomful of theories, your museum of contradictory facts. . . . Your history is simple. See, the man on the slab. The open eye staring.' " For a man in a small room, such realities are unbearable—or, more exactly, unspeakable. DeLillo tries to speak them. Branch ends up with an interpretation that is partly theoretical, partly not, a half-abstraction that acknowledges its inability to satisfy the paranoid mind: "The conspiracy against the President was a rambling affair that succeeded in the short term due mainly to chance. Deft men and fools, ambivalence and fixed will and what the weather was like." And DeLillo concludes "Libra" with the image and the voice of Marguerite Oswald, the "mother in history," standing over her son's grave (marked with a fictitious name) and ranting incomprehensibly, inelegantly, howling with animal confusion. Her presence, like her son's, is an unbeautiful anomaly in the world of patterns and conspiracies, and it gives us a less pleasurable tingle than the glimpses of the "world inside the world." It's an intimation of the more terrifying world without. —TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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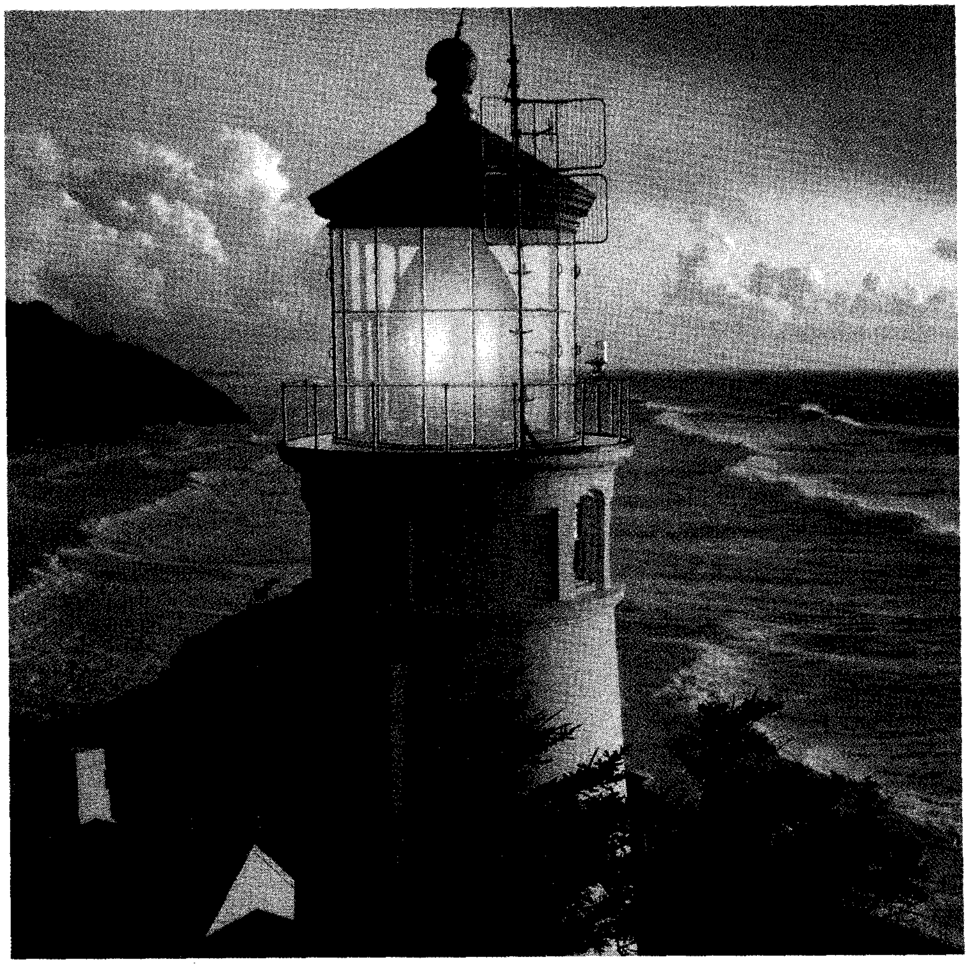

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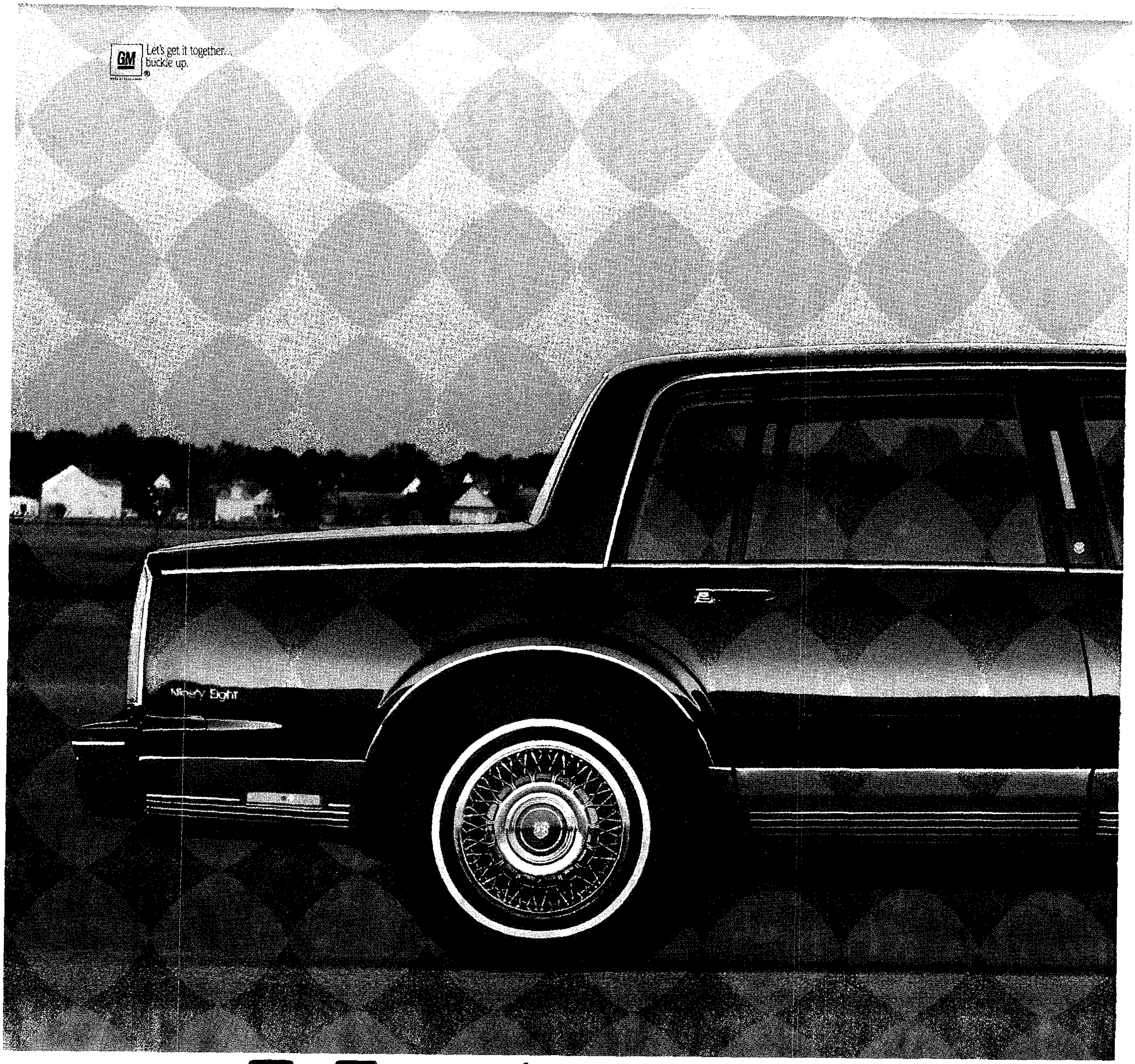

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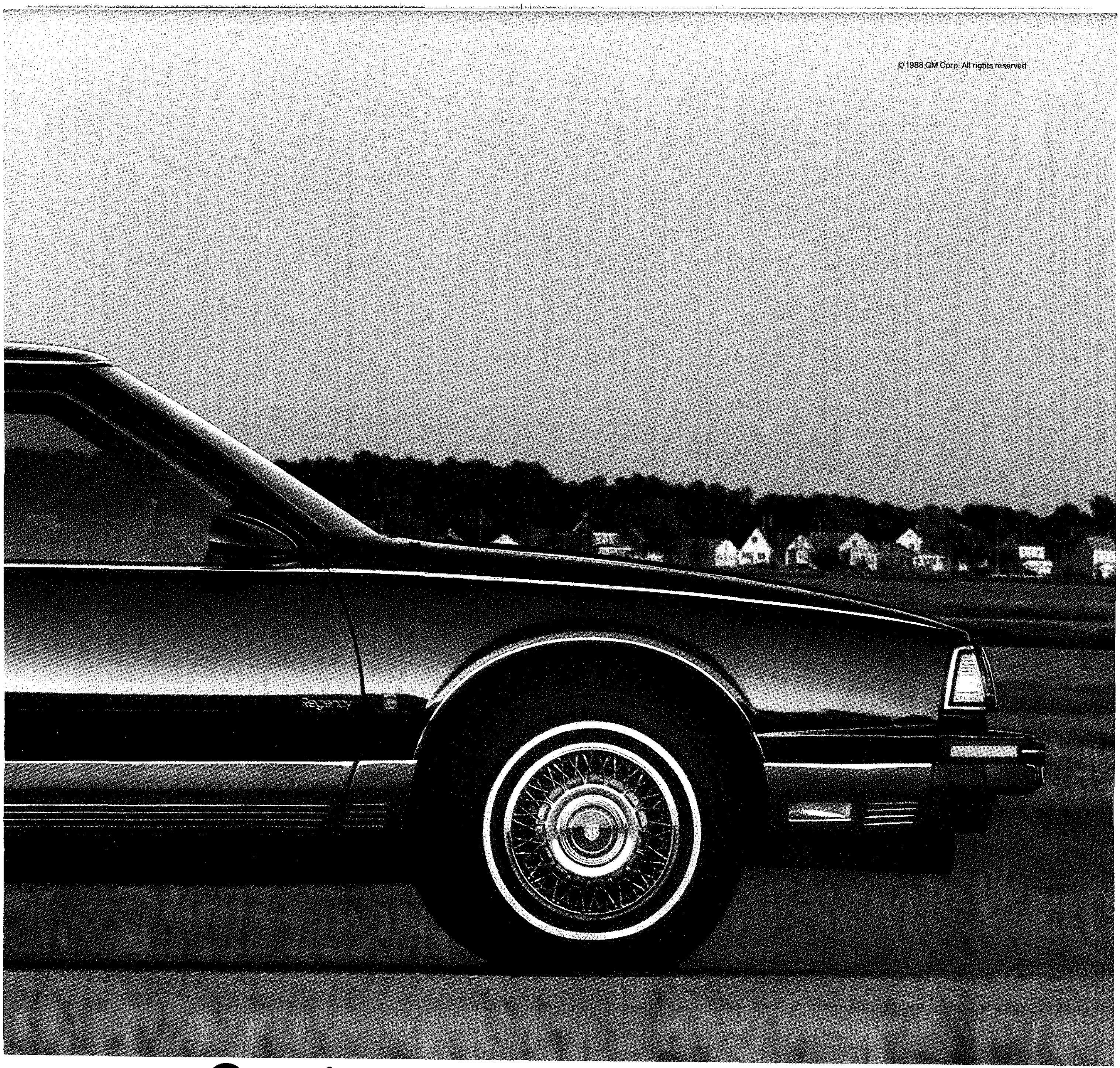

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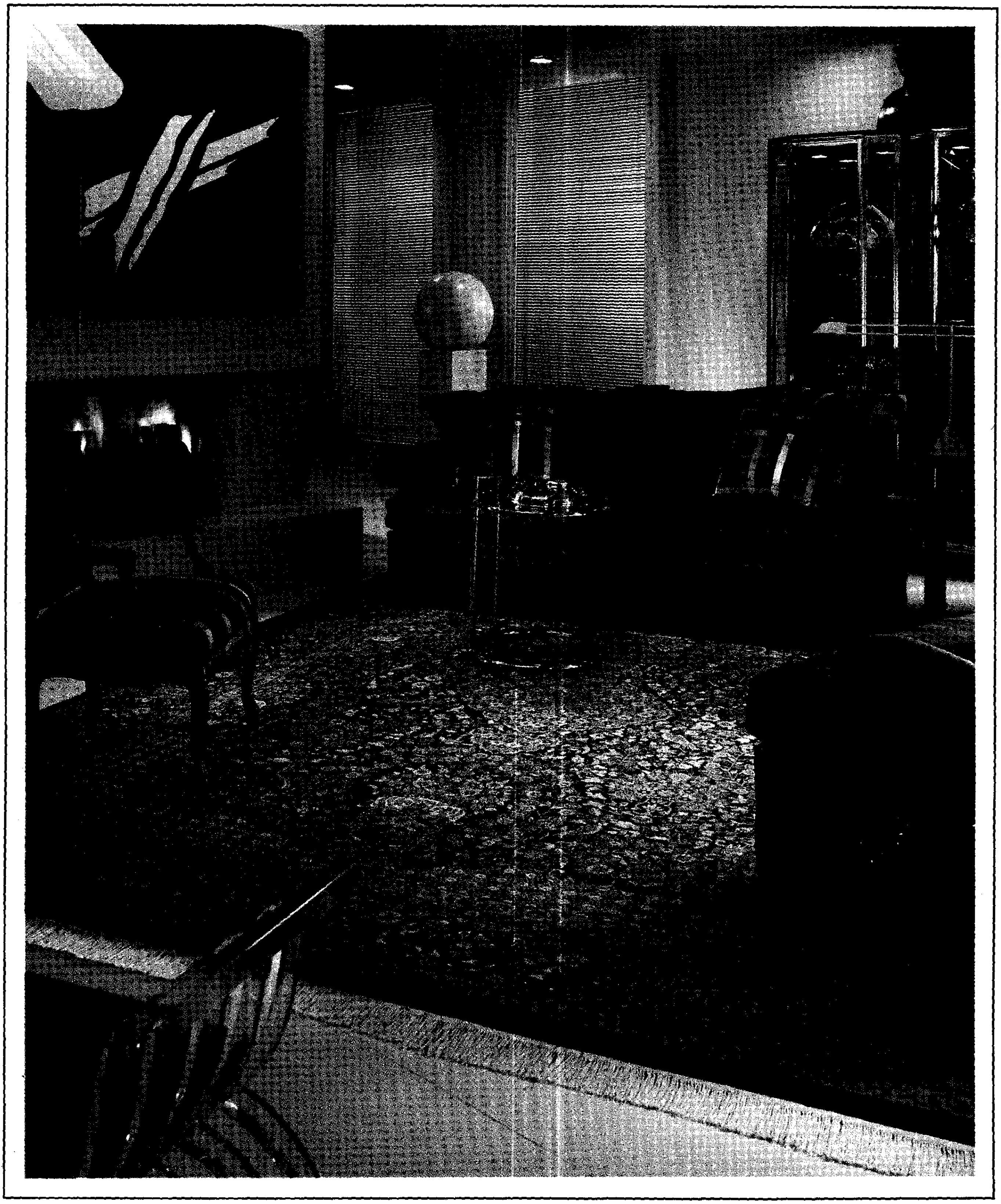

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